THE VAGABOND DUCHESS

CYRIL HUGHES HARTMANN

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THE DUCHESSE MAZARIN

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THE
VAGABOND DUCHESS

THE LIFE OF
HORTENSE MANCINI
DUCHESSE MAZARIN

BY
CYRIL HUGHES HARTMANN
M.A., B.Litt.

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TO MY MOTHER

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PREFACE

The amazing and adventurous career of the Duchesse Mazarin has by no means been neglected by writers even in recent times. Short accounts of her are to be found in Thérèse Louis Latour's *Princesses Ladies and Adventuresses of the reign of Louis XIV* and in Allan Fea's *Some Beauties of the Seventeenth Century*, and various periods of her life have been treated more or less fully by Lucien Perey (*Le Roman du Grand Roi* and *Marie Mancini Colonna*), Forneron (*Louise de Keroualle*), Amédée Renée (*Les Nièces de Mazarin*), Hugh Noel Williams (*Five Fair Sisters* and *Rival Sultanas*) and the Comte de Soissons (*The Seven Richest Heiresses of France*). But I believe that this is the first attempt to compile a full, detailed, and connected account of the whole of her life.

Her history falls naturally into two main divisions, her early life in France, Italy, and Savoy, and her residence in England. My main authority for the earlier part has been her own Memoirs, which, however, have been used with extreme caution, as they are naturally much biassed in her own favour. I trust I have succeeded in obtaining a fair approach to the truth by a diligent comparison between her own statements and the account of her early career given by her husband's counsel in the law-suit of 1689. The arguments of counsel in this case are to be found in Pitaval's *Causes Célèbres et Intéressantes* and in St Evremond's *Works*. I also acknowledge a profound debt to the exhaustive researches displayed in Lucien Perey's two admirable works on Marie Mancini.

Many details both in this part of the book and in the later have been obtained from such contemporary works as the letters of Madame de Sévigné and the memoirs of Mademoiselle de Montpensier, the Duc de Saint Simon, Madame de Motteville, the Abbé de Choisy, and the Marquise de Courcelles.

The account of Hortense's residence at the English Court is founded chiefly on the despatches of the French Ambassadors in the Ministère des Affaires

Etrangères in Paris.[1] These documents were used extensively by Forneron in his *Louise de Keroualle*, but he inevitably omitted much information that related exclusively to Hortense and her affairs. Recourse to the original papers, therefore, had the effect of bringing to light a certain amount of new information about the Duchesse Mazarin, which does not appear in the accounts of such writers as have not gone beyond Forneron.

My other main authority for the last half of the book is the *Works* of St Evremond, the French edition of 1739. Des Maizeaux's English edition of 1728 is by no means complete, but I made a limited use of it to obtain contemporary translations of letters and poems.

Much information has been derived from the *Calendars of State Papers, Domestic* and the *Treasury Books* in the Record Office, and from various volumes of the Historical Manuscripts Commission's Reports. Other sources from which isolated details have been gleaned will be found indicated in the foot-notes to the text.

My sincerest thanks are due to Mr Talbot Hughes, who has not only allowed me to include among my illustrations several hitherto unreproduced miniatures from his collection, but has also given me his invaluable help and advice in the selection and preparation of the other illustrations. I also acknowledge the kindness of the Duke of Richmond and Gordon, K.G. and the Earl of Sandwich in allowing me to reproduce portraits from their collections.

The title of the book is taken from a line in one of St Evremond's poems to Hortense:

Et de petits Esprits vous nomment Vagabonde.

I feel that I may be forgiven for purloining his phrase, since by doing so I am running the risk of classing myself among the "petits Esprits."

CYRIL HUGHES HARTMANN.

[1] Cited in the footnotes under the heading C.A. (Correspondance, Angleterre.)

THE VAGABOND DUCHESS

CHAPTER I

Birth and parentage of Hortense Mancini—The matrimonial policy of Cardinal Mazarin—The first instalment of nieces—The Cardinal in exile—Marriage of Laure Mancini—Hortense comes to France—At Aix—The Conti marriage—Marie sent to a convent—Hortense joins her there—Her letters to the Cardinal—Marie goes out into the world—The Marquis de la Meilleraye—Arrival of Marianne—Death of Madame Mancini—Her character—Death of Laure de Mercœur—Marriage of Olympe—Her friendship with the King—Louis XIV and the young Mancinis—He falls in love with Marie—Her influence over him—The Court at Fontainebleau—Hortense's first love affair—The Savoy marriage project—The Court journeys to Lyons—Hortense and the Duke of Savoy—Offers from Spain—The Cardinal alarmed at the King's love for Marie—Marie and her sisters sent away from Court—Her parting with Louis XIV.

Hortense, the loveliest of that famous constellation of beauties, the nieces of Cardinal Mazarin, was the fourth daughter of the great minister's sister Jeronima and her husband Lorenzo Mancini, a Roman gentleman of fair standing but inconsiderable reputation, whose sole claims to notice are that he dabbled in astrology and was the father of the Mancini sisters. Hortense herself was at great pains to demonstrate the nobility of her descent, and always maintained

that the Mancini family had held a very eminent and considerable position in Rome for at least three hundred years. Whether this claim is admissible or not matters very little, since in the eyes of France she was a Mazarin more than a Mancini and in consequence, like all the Mazarin brood, an upstart of questionable antecedents. And in her life it was the French view that counted, because, although born in Rome of purely Italian blood, she was removed to France in 1653 when she was still a mere child and brought up as a Frenchwoman.[1]

The great Cardinal had recently taken it into his head to advance the fortunes of his family, not so much for their benefit perhaps, as for his own. He was a past-master in the art of killing two birds with one stone, and was well aware that beauty can be the most infallible of instruments in the hands of a really dexterous political fowler.

Mazarin was nothing loth to exploit the charms of his nieces for his own ends. By arranging brilliant marriages for them he could provide powerful connections for himself. The hand of the Cardinal was included in that of his nieces. It was his good fortune that he had such magnificent wares to offer. His nieces were as

[1] In her *Memoirs* she states that she was only six years old at the time, but the probability is that she was a year or so older. She was never very reliable on this delicate subject.

beautiful as they were numerous. Besides the Mancini sisters, Laure, Olympe, Marie, Hortense, and Marianne, there were the two fair Martinozzis, daughters of his sister, Margarita.

This eligible matrimonial material was imported into France in several separate consignments. The first to arrive were the elder Martinozzi girl, Anne Marie, and Laure and Olympe Mancini with their brother Paul, a most promising and attractive boy, whose career was unfortunately cut short by his death from wounds received in the troubles of the Fronde. The girls were brought up with the young king, Louis XIV, and his brother.

Others besides the Cardinal were aware of the matrimonial value of these young ladies in the political game. One of the conditions most insistently exacted from the Cardinal in the Treaty of Ruel was that he should agree not to marry any of his nieces without the consent of the Prince de Condé. A peculiar stipulation in a political treaty, perhaps ; but subsequent events were to prove how right Condé was in attaching so much importance to this point.

These were the days when Mazarin had as yet by no means succeeded in establishing the absolute ascendancy which he afterwards enjoyed. On two occasions during the next few years he was forced to fly the country. It was during his first exile at Bruhl near Cologne that the eldest Mancini

girl, Laure, was married to the Duc de Mercoeur, brother of the more famous Duc de Beaufort. They were both sons of the Duc de Vendôme, and therefore grandchildren of Henri IV and Gabrielle d'Estrées. As the marriage had been arranged while Mazarin was still in power Mercoeur could easily have retracted his promise ; but he proved too chivalrous—or, perchance, too much in love—to desert his betrothed in her fallen fortunes. This honourable conduct not only drew the wrath of Condé upon him, but also made him the laughing-stock of most of the French nobility, who were foolish enough to believe that Mazarin's day was over. But Mercoeur had the laugh over them in the end when the Cardinal returned to France in triumph.

Once the troubles of the Fronde had been finally suppressed Mazarin's position as chief minister was virtually unassailable, and he decided to send for more comely nieces to reinforce his armoury. Both his sisters were summoned to France. Margarita Martinozzi was to bring her remaining girl, Laure, while Madame Mancini was to be accompanied by her third daughter, Marie, and her second son, Philippe. Madame Mancini would infinitely have preferred to take Hortense, who was her favourite, rather than Marie, for whom she had little or no affection, simply because she showed far less promise of

beauty than any other of her children. She did her utmost to persuade Marie to remain behind in Rome and enter a convent, but Marie was not to be persuaded. She pertinently pointed out to her mother that, although at present she felt no sort of vocation, if she should suddenly become divinely inspired to take the veil, at any rate convents were as plentiful in Paris as they were in Rome. But her failure to shelve Marie was not going to divert Madame Mancini from her desire to take Hortense, and so without asking the Cardinal's sanction she took both girls with her.

The party made the voyage to Marseilles in a magnificent galley placed at their disposal by the Republic of Genoa in compliment to the Cardinal. Both during the voyage and at their landing in France they were treated with almost royal honours. From Marseilles they proceeded to Aix, where they were lodged in the palace of the Governor of Provence, the Duc de Mercoeur, brother-in-law to the Mancinis. Here they made a prolonged stay, the Cardinal's intention being that before appearing at Court they should have ample opportunities of becoming acquainted with the language and the manners and customs of their uncle's adopted country, which henceforth was also to be their own. The delicate task of imposing the French veneer on the Italian foundation

was entrusted to Laure de Mercoeur, who joined them at Aix after they had been there for two months and spent another six in superintending this period of initiation into the Gallic mysteries.

At last it was considered safe to let them come to Paris, and they were sent for to attend the culmination of one of their ingenious uncle's diplomatic triumphs, the marriage of their cousin, Anne Marie Martinozzi, to Condé's younger brother, the Prince de Conti. This was nothing more nor less than a political arrangement, Mazarin's object being to detach Conti from his brother and so weaken the forces that still remained most strenuously opposed to him. Conti's attitude was equally cynical. He admitted quite frankly that it was the Cardinal he was taking to wife, and left the choice of his bride to his secretary, the poet Sarrazin, who fortunately for him was a person of some taste and discrimination, and chose the beautiful and amiable Anne Marie Martinozzi in preference to Olympe Mancini, the other candidate for the matrimonial sacrifice. But although there was nothing of the love-match about this marriage, by a curious dispensation of Providence it turned out a success as unqualified as it was unexpected. The debauched husband fell a speedy victim to the gentleness and beauty of his wife and became a reformed character.

The little Mancinis, knowing nothing of the inner circumstances of the alliance, regarded it as no more than a gorgeous and exciting show at which they were for the first time to be introduced to the Court of France in all its glory. With his customary caution Mazarin first subjected them to a personal inspection so that he might satisfy himself that they were quite presentable after their preliminary instruction at Aix. He met them at the Château de Villeroy at Corbeil and to the relief of the anxious mothers expressed himself perfectly satisfied with their manners and appearance. More especially was he enchanted with the grace and beauty of little Hortense, and he assured Madame Mancini that he cordially approved of her decision to bring her to France. She made an equally favourable impression on the Queen-Mother, Anne of Austria, to whom she and her sister were presented immediately on their arrival in Paris. A fortnight later they attended the marriage which was celebrated with great pomp and splendour.

Madame Mancini was given apartments in the Louvre and for a time kept both Marie and Hortense with her. But she had not overcome her dislike for Marie and did not relax her efforts to persuade her to a religious life. Even though she could never make any impression on the girl herself, she did finally succeed in inducing the

Cardinal to place her in the Convent of the Visitation in the Faubourg St Jacques, ostensibly with the idea of completing her education, but really in the hope that she would never come out again.

For a couple of months Hortense remained with her mother. But the Cardinal soon noticed that the complete liberty allowed to her was making her very obstinate and disobedient, and that she was being outrageously spoilt by the entire Court, including the King's younger brother, Philippe, who swore that he could not live without her. Unwilling as he was to compass the premature decease of the heir presumptive to the throne, Mazarin nevertheless thought it advisable to send Hortense to join her sister in the convent.

The good nuns were delighted with Marie, who showed much natural intelligence and an extraordinary aptitude for learning, especially in regard to French and Italian literature. Hortense, being much younger, was still in the throes of learning how to write and spell correctly, an accomplishment much desired by her at this moment; since she wished to inform her uncle that she was not yet receiving the pocket-money he had promised her. At length after much labour she succeeded in evolving a letter in an almost undecipherable hand.[1]

[1] Perey, *Le Roman du Grand Roi*, 39.

1st July, 1654, Couvent de la Visitation,
Faubourg St Jacques.

Monseigneur,

I have been too long in this place without having yet given myself the honour of writing to Your Eminence. I intended to wait till I was better at writing, but I am become impatient to know if little Hortense is still honoured with your remembrance. She is trying hard to learn to serve God and to make herself very good so as to deserve this favour. It would be the summit of my happiness if Your Excellency would favour me with a visit, as you have promised me : if I cannot have that honour, at least I very humbly beg Your Eminence to remember to give orders to Monsieur Colbert touching that which you have promised me every month for my diversion and for giving alms to the poor ; so also Your Eminence will not forget that the time I have been here already, which is nearly a month, should be counted, and my sister Marie, nearly three. Loving her as I do, I should be sorry if she had no share in your liberalities, and she asks you for a small share in the honour of your remembrance, since, like myself, she has no other desire than to render ourselves worthy of the quality of

Your very humble and obedient niece and servant who loves you with all her heart

Hortense de Mancini.

The letter, ungrammatical and ill-spelt as it was, did not fail to have the desired effect. The Cardinal sent the Bishop of Coutances to visit his nieces, bearing the assurances of his continued affection and, what was more to Hortense's taste, her pocket-money and a number of fans and other little presents. In her letter of thanks she hardly attempted to disguise from her uncle that it was his gifts more than his compliments that had convinced her of the reality of his affection.[1]

Monseigneur,

I am enchanted to find that you do your little Hortense the honour of thinking of her. Monseigneur de Coutances will be able to bear witness to you of my joy, and especially when he gave me the presents, I believed he was being truthful when he told me that you still loved me a little, which has made me pray to God with all my heart for Your Eminence, that you may have the goodness to continue this favour. May God keep you in health while I try my best not to forfeit the honour I bear of being your very humble niece and servant who loves you with all her heart,

Hortense de Mancini.

In October, 1655, the Cardinal suddenly sent for Marie to join the Court at La Fère. He had begun to think of arranging a suitable marriage for her. The young man he had chosen was Armand

[1] Perey, *Le Roman du Grand Roi*, 41.

de la Porte, Marquis de la Meilleraye, only son of one of his oldest friends, the Maréchal de la Meilleraye. The La Portes, although distantly related to the Richelieus, were not of very illustrious lineage and were looked at somewhat askance by the ancient nobility. But the Maréchal had raised himself to a distinguished height by his own merits and the valuable services he had rendered his country. If in the process he had amassed an enormous fortune by none too scrupulous methods, the Cardinal was the last person in the world able or willing to think the worse of him for that. He had taken the son into his own household for a time and had conceived a great affection for him. At one time he had thought of him as a husband for Olympe, but the young man had declined the honour in a manner more amusing than flattering to the lady. He assured the Cardinal that, if he married at all, it would be to secure his salvation, and he was certain that a marriage with Olympe would simply set him on the high road to damnation. Strangely enough the Cardinal does not seem to have been annoyed at this somewhat discourteous refusal, although he was extremely fond of Olympe. He was almost the only person who was, and the similarity between their characters probably accounts for his affection as well as for other people's dislike.

The Cardinal was, however, very seriously annoyed when the Marquis also rejected Marie, and especially because of the reason he gave, which was none other than that he had fallen desperately in love with little Hortense. It appears that he first saw her at a ball given by Monsieur at the Palais Royal in 1655.[1] His passion for her soon became obvious to everyone, and he was much rallied on falling in love with a child that had scarce left the nursery. But the teasing served only to intensify his love. He swore that if he could not marry Hortense he would go into a monastery, and he even told the Duchesse d'Aiguillon that if he could only be married to Hortense he would be content to die three months after. Mazarin thought that all this was very ridiculous, and did not conceal his anger. Nothing, he said, would induce him to give Hortense to the Marquis de la Meilleraye, he would sooner marry her to one of his lackeys.[2]

In June of this year, 1655, there had taken place another in the series of brilliant marriages arranged by Cardinal Mazarin for the advancement of his family and himself. Laure Martinozzi was married to Alfonso D'Este, son and heir of the Duke of Modena. A daughter of this marriage, Mary Beatrice of Modena, was later to marry

[1] Rénée, *Les Nièces de Mazarin*, 318.
[2] *The Memoires of the Dutchess Mazarine*, 1676, 5.

James, Duke of York, and eventually become Queen of England. The bride was escorted to her new home by a brilliant train headed by the Duc and Duchesse de Noailles, who afterwards proceeded to Rome and brought back to France the remaining Mancini children, Marianne and Alphonse. Marianne was a gay, malicious little creature, whose prettiness and precocious wit speedily made her the darling of the Court of France. She was only six when she began to write verse and was affectionately regarded by the courtier-poets as a sort of toy patron saint.

For the next year Marie and Marianne lived with their mother in her apartments at the Louvre, while Hortense, who also had left the convent soon after Marie's departure, was put in charge of her sister, Laure, who seems to have given her a great deal more freedom than was altogether good for her.

In December, 1656, Madame Mancini died, more, it would appear, as a result of her astrologer-husband's prediction that she would die at the age of forty-two than for any more reasonable cause. Madame de Motteville describes Madame Mancini as a gentle and virtuous woman, who made no attempt to interfere in political matters, but led a retired life and devoted herself entirely to the education and welfare of her young family.[1]

[1] *Mémoires de Madame de Motteville, IV*, 78.

Marie gives a very different impression of her mother's character, and at any rate there seems to be little doubt that she was given to favouring certain of her children, notably Hortense and Marianne, above the others. Her treatment of Marie was disgraceful even to the end. With her last dying breath she besought the Cardinal to place Marie in a convent on the ground that she had always found her bad by nature and that her husband in one of his prophetic moments had warned her that she would be the cause of many misfortunes.[1]

Madame Mancini was too little known at Court for her death to cause very much grief; but there was universal distress at the sudden death a few weeks later of Laure de Mercoeur, shortly after she had given birth to her third son. Her gentle, charitable nature had made her beloved by all who knew her. Her husband was heart-broken. He never married again, but sought consolation in religion and eventually became a priest. He died a Cardinal and Papal Legate in France.

Laure's death had been utterly unexpected, and the marriage of her sister, Olympe, had been arranged for the 19th of February, 1657, long before there was any idea that the family might be in mourning. In the circumstances Mazarin did not think fit to alter the arrangements, and

[1] *Mémoires de Madame de Motteville, IV.* 78.

accordingly the marriage took place on the appointed day. The title of Comte de Soissons was revived in favour of the bridegroom, Prince Eugéne de Savoie-Carignan, and Olympe and her husband were henceforth treated as being of the blood royal.

Olympe had been brought up with Louis XIV, and the great affection and intimacy that had grown up between them had induced in her a hope that perhaps she might marry him. But the King's feeling for her never went to this length ; she amused him a good deal, perhaps even at times thrilled his boyish heart a little ; but his sentimental affection never grew into love. Olympe cannot have failed to perceive that her hold on him was very slight ; moreover, she knew that the Queen-Mother was rigidly opposed to the match, while she could expect no help from the Cardinal, who, whatever he may have hoped in his secret heart, outwardly at least affected to disapprove. For these reasons she abandoned her designs on His Majesty, and accepted with alacrity the really illustrious alliance proposed to her by the Cardinal. That she was right in doing so was shown by the King's obvious delight at her marriage. If he had ever been really seriously in love with her he could not have been so pleased. But his affection for her remained as strong as ever, and he was a very constant visitor to her house.

It was during these visits to her apartments that he saw a good deal of her sisters and her brother, Philippe, and took them also into his favour. He made the youthful Philippe Captain of his own company of Musketeers, giving him as his lieutenant a very experienced soldier, Charles de Batz de Castelmore, better known by the title of Comte D'Artagnan later conferred on him. Louis XIV who usually detested little girls also became very fond of Hortense, who seemed to grow more and more beautiful every day. Loret in his "Muse Historique" finds extravagant terms in which to laud the loveliness of

> ". . . la mignonne Hortense
> Qui parut dans ce noble bal
> Comme un jeune astre oriental."

But it was to Marie that the King's attention was above all drawn. She had improved in looks beyond measure, even if she was not as pretty as Hortense, and she possessed in addition a vivacity and charm that gradually began to make some impression on the King's susceptible heart. He constantly sought her company, and Olympe perceived with chagrin that his daily visits to the Hôtel de Soissons were no longer due to her own attractions so much as to those of her younger sister.

It was some time before the King's affection for Marie grew into a genuine passion. At first she seems to have been more attracted by him than

he was by her; in fact, it was the revelation of her love for him that first made him realize the intensity of his feelings for her. It so happened that while the Court was at Calais in April, 1658, the King was suddenly stricken with a severe attack of fever. His life was despaired of, and on one occasion extreme unction was actually administered to him. Marie, whose love for him had steadily been growing, was utterly unable to restrain her grief at the prospect of losing him, and her ceaseless tears became the talk of the Court. On the King's recovery he was told of the distress and anxiety which Marie had displayed during his illness. It is at such times as these that monarchs are able to test the sincerity of those who profess to love them. On the point of death as he had been, Louis had not failed to observe how his waning star had been deserted by those courtiers whom he had thought most faithful, and who with one accord had turned to his brother, the star that soon was like to rise in his stead. The contrast between the disinterested affection of Marie and the selfishness of others struck him with a force that contained as much of joy as of sorrow, and in his gratitude for her sympathy he came to discover that a great love for her had sprung up in his heart.

Mademoiselle de Montpensier says that Louis XIV was never gayer and better-tempered than

when he was in love with Marie Mancini.[1] This was the most romantic and emotional passion of his life, and by far the most creditable. Marie's love for him was the love that exalts and does not debase. She wanted the object of her love to be worthy of her love. There are women who do not care to what depths of degradation a man descends for their sake, provided only that they have his heart. Marie was not such as these. Before anyone else she perceived the latent greatness that was within him and she devoted all her heart, all her intelligence, all her energy to bringing it forth. For such a task as this she did not lack gifts. She possessed a kingly interest in kingly things. The mysteries of politics and religion claimed her attention no less than the arts of Peace and War. She it was who first fired Louis with great ambitions ; she it was who first inspired him with a taste for learning. She found him ignorant ; she left him wise. The encouragement bestowed on Art and Literature by the Roi Soleil played great part in making his reign so glorious in these fields ; that he ever bestowed it is due to the influence of this early love. If Louis XIV deserves the title of "Le Grand Monarque" which posterity has agreed to give him, no little of the credit is due to the inspiration afforded him at his most impressionable age by the love of Marie Mancini.

[1] *Mémoires de Mademoiselle de Montpensier*, VII, 100.

LOUIS XIV

[*face p 18*

From this time onwards the King and Marie became inseparable. She was virtually a Queen. The whole Court centred round her, and all the festivities at Fontainebleau this summer were designed in her honour. This was the happiest time of her life. The two lovers devoted themselves entirely to enjoyment. There were comedies and ballets, informal picnics in the woods, elaborate water-parties on the lake. All thoughts of what the future might hold were rigorously banished; it was enough that they loved each other, and the present was all that mattered to them.

Marie was in love with love, and so could not bear those around her to remain immune from the loveliest of follies. She was always exhorting Hortense to fall in love. Hortense says that "being extreme young and childish" she could not obey her sister's behest. She claims that up to the time of her marriage her heart was untouched. The Cardinal, so she avers, was very apprehensive of her engaging her affections to anyone, and gave instructions to her governess, Madame de Venel, to keep close watch on her and to catechize her constantly about her supposed admirers. "But I having no tie more to one than to another," says Hortense, "she could never make any discovery; and she had been in ignorance to this hour, had not the

indiscretion of my sister made her believe what was not."[1]

Hortense's own story of her first encounter with love may be given for what it is worth ; but it is unfortunate that there is no other account available of the incident, since her version scarcely bears the stamp of truth upon it. This was that, growing weary of Marie's constant exhortations, she at last, more to please her sister than for any other reason, told her that there was one young man whom she preferred to all others at Court, but added that she should be very sorry if he were to become half so pleasing to her as the King was to Marie. After much pressing Marie persuaded her to acknowledge that the person she looked upon with so much favour was a certain young Italian subaltern in the Guards. No sooner had she extracted the romantic secret than she hastened to confide it to the King. The story soon came to the Cardinal's ears, and he at once proceeded to turn the mole-hill into a mountain. The young man himself also inevitably got to hear of the supposed infatuation for him of the Cardinal's prettiest niece ; and the knowledge, says Hortense, "raised in him thoughts which he perhaps never had before." He began to make advances to Hortense who swears that she rejected his suit with contempt in spite of Marie's

[1] *Mazarin Memoirs*, 1676, 13.

remonstrances.[1] It is of course possible that all this is quite true, but it looks remarkably like one of those rose-coloured versions of inconvenient incidents in her career for which Hortense displayed so great an aptitude.

At first the Cardinal affected not to notice the extraordinary intimacy between his niece, Marie, and the King. Possibly he did not consider that the affair was really serious, or possibly he was temporizing in the belief that premature interference might bring matters to an inconvenient head. It is extremely unlikely that he ever seriously considered the possibility of a marriage between his niece and the King. For one thing he knew Marie's character thoroughly and dreaded her influence over Louis, which he was certain would never be used in his interests. He himself had no sort of ascendancy over her, and if she became Queen of France he knew he would be relegated to the background. But there was another reason against the marriage which weighed with him still more, and this was that for years his mind had been set upon marrying Louis XIV to a Spanish Infanta; for he regarded this alliance as the only possible method of procuring peace for France after more than twenty years of warfare. The obvious sincerity in his letters on the subject to the King, the Queen-Mother,

[1] *Mazarin Memoirs*, 1676, 14.

Madame de Venel, and Marie herself should once for all suffice to place his conduct in the matter above suspicion. If he had desired Louis to marry his niece, he had but to let matters slide a little, and the marriage would have been accomplished without any help from him. On the contrary he strained every nerve to prevent it and to bring about the Spanish marriage in the face of almost overwhelming difficulties.

The negotiations which took place in the autumn of this year for a marriage between Louis XIV and Princess Margarita of Savoy were never intended to be sincere. Mazarin hoped by this adroit move to force the hand of Philip IV of Spain and induce him to offer the hand of his own daughter to the King of France. It was a masterstroke. No sooner had the Court proceeded to Lyons to meet the royal family of Savoy than a special envoy from Spain arrived with the offer of peace and the hand of the Infanta. The project of the Savoy marriage was immediately set aside, and the anger of the young Duke at the slight put upon his sister probably had something to do with the failure of the negotiations for a marriage between him and Hortense Mancini, though the reason actually given was that he had placed his demands too high. He had asked for the fortress of Pignerol as one of the conditions of the marriage, and though the Cardinal was

prepared to give him his favourite niece, he refused to throw in as a makeweight a fortress that belonged not to him but to France.[1] Certainly the reason was not that the Duke was disappointed with Hortense herself. He had asked for her to be shown to him as soon as he had arrived at Lyons and had declared that he found her very beautiful.[2]

Now that the Spanish marriage was actually well within the bounds of possibility Mazarin at last began to take alarm at the ever-increasing intimacy between Marie and the King. It had originally been arranged that Louis was to go to Lyons accompanied only by the Cardinal and certain of the high nobility of France ; but he had cunningly requested Anne of Austria to come with him, swearing that he could never bring himself to marry any woman unless his mother approved of her,[3] but knowing also that if she came she would be bound to bring her ladies with her. Thus he would not be separated from his beloved. Both during the journey to Lyons and on the return to Paris the lovers had countless opportunities of being alone together ; since Louis insisted that in this magnificent weather some of the younger members of the Court should ride instead of going in the carriages. In the evenings, instead of

[1] *Mémoires de Madame de Motteville*, IV, 228.
[2] *Mémoires de Mademoiselle de Montpensier*, VII, 49.
[3] *Ibid*, VII, 11.

supping with the Queen-Mother, Louis would offer a collation to his own favoured friends. Afterwards they would start gaming, but in a little while Louis himself would retire from the tables to converse with Marie, leaving Hortense and Marianne to preside in his place. Hortense was always assisted in keeping the bank by her ardent admirer, the Marquis de la Meilleraye, who was assiduously dancing attendance on her during this expedition to Lyons.[1]

Both His Majesty and the Marquis continued to pursue their suits when the Court returned to Paris. The Marquis was not in the least deterred by the Cardinal's reiterated refusals to grant him the hand of Hortense ; and his attentions to her were particularly remarked at a magnificent ball given to the Court at the Arsenal by his parents.

In view of these circumstances the Cardinal thought it would be dangerous to leave his nieces in Paris when he himself had to proceed south to begin the negotiations for peace with Don Luis de Haro, the Spanish King's plenipotentiary. He announced that it was his purpose to send his nieces to La Rochelle in the charge of their governess Madame de Venel. The King easily fathomed the Cardinal's motives, and straightway went to him and asked for Marie's hand in marriage. His request was respectfully but

[1] *Mémoires de Mademoiselle de Montpensier*, VII, 17.

firmly refused. Neither threats nor prayers could move His Eminence, who represented to the King that his marriage with the Infanta was necessary for the good of the country. He professed himself deeply honoured by His Majesty's regard for his niece ; but held it his duty to refuse to allow him to make her his Queen. He remained adamant in his determination to remove his nieces, and the utmost he would grant Louis was that the lovers might write to each other, and that they should be allowed an interview at Bayonne when the Court should come south. Even these concessions were granted by him with the utmost reluctance.

Both the King and Marie were in despair, but they knew that the Cardinal was inflexible and realized that they must accept the inevitable. Louis' parting-gift to Marie was a magnificent pearl necklace which the wretched circumstances of the Queen-Mother of England forced her to sell about this time. Before Marie left on June the 22nd, 1659, she had a last interview with her royal lover, in the course of which he dissolved into tears. Quiet determination would have appealed to her more than this display of emotion. There was more than a touch of scorn in her famous parting words to him : " Sire, vous êtes roi, vous pleurez, et je pars."

CHAPTER II

The journey to Poitiers—The couriers of His Majesty —Arrival at La Rochelle—Madame de Venel's anxiety —Spiteful Marianne—Her rhymed letters to the Cardinal—The visit to the Queen-Mother at St Jean D'Angély—The Queen's watches—Correspondence of the Cardinal and Madame de Venel—The persistence of the Grand Master—Apparent submission of Marie— The Mancinis at Brouage—Marianne's quarrels with Hortense—Hortense holds her own—Marianne unabashed—The mission of the Bishop of Fréjus—His character—Hortense and Marianne unwilling to leave their sister—Marie refuses to marry the Constable Colonna—The Grand Master's presents—Hortense's attitude towards him—Charles II seeks the hand of Hortense—Mazarin's refusal—His interview on the subject with Mademoiselle de Montpensier—Opposition of the English Royalists to the marriage.

Madame de Venel and her three charges proceeded to Notre Dame de Cléry, where they were joined by the Cardinal himself. In his company they journeyed as far as Poitiers. The liberal interpretation placed by the King on the permission accorded him to correspond with Marie gave Mazarin considerable annoyance. The travellers were pursued by a constant stream of special couriers and sometimes Marie would receive as many as five letters in the course of a few minutes. The Cardinal wrote to the King respectfully requesting him to write less frequently and to make use of the ordinary post, but all his

remonstrances were unavailing. The flow of couriers continued unabated, even augmented by those sent by the Marquis de la Meilleraye, who was now Grand Master of the Artillery, his father having obtained permission to resign this post in his favour. With serpentine subtlety the Grand Master did not address his letters to Hortense, directing them always to Marie and Marianne. But the subject of his effusions was always Hortense.[1]

At Poitiers the Cardinal and his nieces parted company, they turning off to La Rochelle, while His Eminence went on to Bayonne. The young ladies were received everywhere with great honour, especially at St Maixent, where the Grand Master had arranged so magnificent a reception for them that Madame de Venel wrote to the Cardinal that the Queen herself could not have been received with more honour.[2] Nor did the city of La Rochelle show itself backward in honouring the nieces of its Governor. Addresses were presented to them by the municipality, salutes were fired, and the whole town was illuminated.

Mazarin had hoped that separation would cause the lovers to forget each other, but he was doomed to disappointment. There was a daily increase both in the number and in the bulk of the King's

[1] Perey, *Roman*, 178.
[2] *Ibid*, 178.

letters. Madame de Venel was at her wit's end to know what to do, and her letters to the Cardinal betrayed her disquiet. She suspected everyone, particularly Hortense. She told Mazarin that Marie and Hortense would shut themselves up for the greater part of the day to write letters, and she was quite sure that she did not see all those that were written. As Hortense submitted to her only those which she wrote to His Eminence, she asked him to write and tell her that she must show all the letters she wrote before sending them off.[1]

Madame de Venel was always calling on the Cardinal to intervene where Hortense was concerned. She seems to have thought that he was the only person who really had any influence over her. "Mademoiselle Hortense gives me a good deal of trouble and will certainly give me more; but between now and the time when we go to Paris I hope she will change, and in any case a few words from Your Eminence will put everything right."[2]

Little Marianne was not admitted into her sisters' confidence. They suspected, probably with justice, that Madame de Venel was using her to spy on them, and so they locked themselves up and would not let her come into their room.

[1] Perey, *Roman*, 194.
[2] *Ibid*, 209.

Marianne was naturally very much upset, but being a spiteful little creature, she got her own back on Hortense by making her a butt for her wit in the odd little rhymed letters which she wrote to the Queen-Mother and the Cardinal. To the Queen she wrote that she was quite certain that her sister Hortense would never learn to dance well

" Parce qu'elle n'a pas la patience
De retenir sa grosse panse."[1]

Perhaps there was a sly allusion to the Grand Master in a passage in one of her letters to the Cardinal.

" Ma sœur Hortense ne songe à rien
Qu'à se divertir fort bien.
Elle vous aime de tout son cœur,
Envoyez lui un beau serviteur."[2]

Marianne knew all about the Grand Master's passion ; for to her great disgust he would write her letters full of praises of Hortense.

Although Mazarin did his utmost to withdraw his promise that the King and Marie should have an interview when the Court came south, Louis was determined to hold him to his word and announced that it was his intention to visit the young ladies at La Rochelle. Seeing that it was impossible to avoid an interview, the Cardinal suggested that the Queen-Mother should send for

[1] Perey, *Roman*, 180.
[2] *Ibid*, 189.

his nieces to meet her at Saint Jean D'Angély. This would cause less scandal than if the King were ostentatiously to turn aside and visit them at La Rochelle. He endeavoured further to throw obstacles in the way of the two lovers' seeing very much of each other by commanding his nieces to pay particular attentions to their sister Olympe and their cousin, the Princesse de Conti, who would be with the Court. It was no doubt at his suggestion that Olympe endeavoured to embarrass Marie by asking her to sup with her. But Marie did not intend to be deprived of one moment with her lover and replied that she would come if the King did not honour her with a visit that evening, which of course he did. Absence had not lessened his love for her, nor hers for him.

The three girls were received very graciously by the Queen-Mother, who presented them all with watches of gold and enamel.

> " La reine nous a donné
> Quatre montres en vérité
> Qui sont les plus belles
> Qui soient dans La Rochelle ;
> Ma sœur Hortense a eu
> La plus belle montre de tout."[1]

So wrote Marianne to her uncle, but it was rather unfair of her to imply that Hortense had been treated more generously than herself, for it was just the other way round. The Queen gave

[1] Perey, *Roman*, 261.

Marianne four watches exactly alike except for the colour, telling her to choose one for herself and give the others to her sisters. This Marianne did. The fourth watch she gave to Madame de Venel, as that lady relates in a letter to the Cardinal. In the same letter she informed him that everyone had agreed that Hortense had grown in beauty as well as in stature since she had left Paris.[1]

Marie returned to La Rochelle with renewed hopes. She had found the King as much in love with her as ever, and he had assured her that the obstacles to the Spanish marriage were very great and that he himself could easily make them still greater. She seemed to be confident that something would inevitably happen to wreck the Spanish marriage at the last moment and leave Louis free to marry her. While she was at Saint Jean D'Angély she had tried to persuade the Queen to allow her and her sisters to join the Court at Bordeaux, but the Queen had not been willing to commit herself and had replied that that was a matter for the Cardinal to decide.

Mazarin gave a flat refusal to the request. The report he had received of the interview at Saint Jean D'Angély had made him very angry with Marie and Hortense. Madame de Venel had informed him that just before the King had parted from Marie he had called Hortense to him and

[1] Perey, *Roman*, 238.

spoken to her earnestly for a while. She had come away crying.[1] This sufficed to convince Mazarin that Hortense was now heart and soul in the interests of the two lovers. He wrote to Madame de Venel : " It is with great displeasure that I see that she is involving Hortense in all her plans, but I am not surprised, because my niece will have persuaded her that if she falls in with her wishes, she will secure a brilliant future for her, and as Hortense is still a child, she must take this for gospel truth."[2] He also intimated that he was extremely annoyed with the way in which Marie and Hortense had neglected the Comtesse de Soissons and the Princesse de Conti at Saint Jean D'Angély. For once Madame de Venel was disposed to be just to the girls. In her next letter to Mazarin she told him quite plainly that it was entirely the King's fault if they had not paid their respects to the Comtesse de Soissons and the Princesse de Conti, as he had left them no time to be civil to anyone else but himself.[3] In regard to Marie's influence over Hortense she thought that the Cardinal had alarmed himself unduly about it. " As for Hortense," she wrote, " Your Eminence can make her do what you like, when she sees that you are really angry."[4]

[1] Perey, *Roman*, 246.
[2] *Ibid*, 253.
[3] *Ibid*, 254.
[4] *Ibid*, 256.

Where Hortense was concerned Madame de Venel was far more disposed to be alarmed at the machinations of the Marquis de la Meilleraye. She was constantly writing to the Cardinal on the subject. "The Grand Master writes all the news every post to Mademoiselle, and to Mademoiselle Marianne he sent a note which spoke of nothing but Mademoiselle Hortense. I have seen to it that Mademoiselle Marianne will mention this to Your Eminence so that you can speak of it without anyone suspecting the real source of your information."[1] But if the Cardinal did speak to Hortense's admirer, who was with him at St Jean de Luz, his rebukes were useless, for the Grand Master continued to write. Nor was he to be deterred by remonstrances from the governess herself, who told Mazarin that "The Grand Master continues to write and puts so many messages for Mademoiselle Hortense in his notes to Mademoiselle Marianne, that last post I felt obliged to scold him a little; and this post I am doing the same."[2]

Since her return from St Jean d'Angély Marie had suddenly begun to affect a complete submission to the Cardinal's will. This new attitude was obviously insincere and was probably adopted at the suggestion of the King, who considered that there was nothing to be gained by enraging the

[1] Perey, *Roman*, 246.
[2] *Ibid*, 264.

Cardinal. However that may be, Marie now informed her uncle that she would fall in with his desires and would even consent to marry, if he would find a suitable husband for her. In September at her own request she removed with her sisters to Brouage. Here she became much gayer than she had been for a long time. Instead of shutting herself up and sulking, she would play cards and even join in games of blindman's buff with her sisters and the four Mesdemoiselles des Marennes, whom she had asked to stay with her. She also consented to receive visits from the neighbouring gentry. There can be little doubt that she was playing a part. In the event of the Cardinal's attempting as a last resort to fulfil his threat to shut her up in a convent she could make her escape much more easily from here than from La Rochelle. Brouage was only a little fishing-town among the salt marshes, and if the necessity arose it would be comparatively simple to board a fishing-boat and place herself beyond the Cardinal's reach.

Mazarin was not deceived by her apparent submission, though he outwardly professed to be delighted that she had come to this valiant resolution of her own accord, and advised her to read Seneca to keep her steadfast in her determination. Madame de Venel was not deceived either. She was so overwhelmed by her anxiety that she

now trusted no one but the Deity. Of this fact Marianne characteristically informed the Cardinal.

" Pour madame de Venel nous ne la voyons presque point
Parce qu'elle est du matin jusqu'au soir à genoux,
Qu'on dirait qu'on l'a attachée avec deux clous."[1]

The spiteful little Marianne must have been a constant thorn in the side of her sisters. She possessed an extraordinarily precocious genius, and was far more advanced than Hortense, whom she would rally on the childishness of her handwriting and the feebleness of her style. She would even confide her low opinion of her sister's talents to the Cardinal himself.

Ma sœur Hortense vous écrit
D'un style fort petit,
Et je crois que vous ne lui ferez pas l'honneur de lire
Ce qu'elle ose vous écrire ;
Elle n'a pas voulu me consulter
Sur ce qu'elle vous a mandé,
Et l'on voit dans cette rencontre
Que fort peu d'esprit elle montre,
Car j'ai été fort fachée
Que cette lettre elle vous ait envoyée ;
On se moquera d'elle
Comme d'une sauterelle.[2]

Mazarin was delighted with Marianne's letters, though he felt obliged to write to Hortense and tell her that she was to take no notice of the gibes of her malicious little sister, but to continue to write to him, for he was perfectly satisfied with

[1] Perey, *Roman*, 311.
[2] *Ibid*, 301.

her writing and her style.[1] Hortense showed in her reply to him that she could at least hold her own against Marianne.

"I do not think Your Eminence could ever know what joy I had on receiving the letter you have done me the honour of writing to me and your kind command to write to you by every post, but Your Eminence will at least believe that I am pleased. I think that Marianne will soon have recourse to one of us others to make verses for her, as she has exhausted all her rhymes since she has done herself the honour to write to Your Eminence. This time her verses are a little out of rhythm, but we dare not say anything about it to her as we know that they amuse Your Eminence. For a whole hour she has been worrying me to find out what I am writing to Your Eminence, but I would rather be beaten than show her my letter."[2]

Marianne was not in the least abashed. She promptly wrote the Cardinal a most impertinent little letter in verse.[3]

Dès que j'ai reçu votre lettre
Elle m'a donné une si grande joie
Que si l'on m'eût fait roi !
Je suis si aise que mes vers
Vous divertissent quoiqu'ils soient de travers !

[1] Perey, *Roman*, 320.

[2] *Ibid*, 321.

[3] Marianne Mancini to Cardinal Mazarin, 1st October, 1659. Perey, *Roman*, 322.

Mais ils sont fort beaux pour une personne de mon âge
Qui n'est pas volage.
Vous avez écrit à ma sœur Hortense
Qu'elle écrive tous les ordinaires
Et je crois que ses vers
Ne seront pas de bon air
Quand ils seraient du meilleur air, je pense
Que les miens les effaceront
Car ils ont plus d'esprit et de raison.
Vous me dites de prier mes sœurs d'achever mes rimes,
Mais j'ai l'esprit trop magnanime.
Ma sœur Hortense m'a prié je ne sais combien
De finir sa lettre qui ne vaut rien ;
Elle m'a fort étourdie
En lisant toutes ses folies,
Et moi je vous dis sagement :
Je veux que vous soyez mon amant
Et je vous aimerai tendrement
Jusques au jour du jugement.

Being now certain that the conclusion of the Spanish marriage could not be long deferred, Mazarin set about finding a suitable husband for Marie. The suitor he most favoured was Charles Colonna, Prince di Palliano, and Constable of the kingdom of Naples. Besides belonging to one of the most illustrious families in Italy, he was young, rich, and reputed to be both handsome and intelligent. The Cardinal sent Ondedei, Bishop of Fréjus, to propose this marriage to his niece. This intriguing prelate was one of the Cardinal's most trusted confidants. As a mere adventurer he had fervently supported Mazarin's cause during the Fronde, and had displayed such an ability for the less reputable bypaths of diplomacy that the

Cardinal had resolved to secure his permanent services. In his own opinion ecclesiastical robes were the most befitting cloak for his peculiar talents, and so from one day to the next he had blossomed into a Bishop. This distinction he had obtained, of course, from Mazarin, who, however, had considerable difficulty in persuading the Pope to confirm the appointment to high ecclesiastical office of so notorious a knave. The Cardinal was wont to employ him on such difficult affairs as this present problem, which he himself described to Colbert as the most delicate affair he had had to deal with in his life, and the one which had caused him the greatest uneasiness.

The Bishop was also charged to bring Hortense and Marianne to join the Cardinal, whose intention it was that they should be present at the King's marriage. At any other time both of them would have been overjoyed at the prospect, but Marie was so distressed at the idea of their leaving her that both of them refused to go, and the Bishop, who had been given absolute discretion in the matter, thought it wiser to defer to their protests.[1]

The project of an Italian marriage did not appeal at all to Marie, who told the Cardinal that she was most unwilling to go to Rome. She would infinitely prefer to marry a Frenchman, and even suggested Prince Charles of Lorraine, whom

[1] *Mazarin Memoirs*, 10.

she had never seen, but of whom she had heard very favourable report. Mazarin was disposed to think that Marie should not be allowed to remain in France after her marriage, but for the moment he temporized. He did not altogether reject the possibility of a marriage with Prince Charles of Lorraine, but said that there was no necessity to come to an immediate decision in the matter. He promised at any rate that he would not force her into any marriage against her inclinations. But all the time he was thoroughly determined that she should marry Colonna, and decided that her resistance must be overcome by fair means or foul.

In the meantime the Grand Master's behaviour still continued to cause Madame de Venel much anxiety. He paid frequent visits to the young ladies at Brouage, and when he was away from them inundated Marie and Marianne with letters. Marianne in the end grew quite indignant and protested to the Cardinal. "I must ask you to reprimand the Grand Master, as I am very angry with him for always writing to me only to ask for news of my sister Hortense."[1] To give the Grand Master his due he did endeavour to recompense Hortense's sisters for using them as intermediaries. He was constantly sending them presents. One day the most marvellous talking parrot would

[1] Perey, *Roman*, 388.

arrive; another time he would send them all little gold-mounted walking-sticks. The shower of gifts served to embarrass Madame de Venel still further, and she vainly attempted to persuade the girls to return them. In one of her letters to the Cardinal she describes some of the Grand Master's typical gifts. "The Grand Master has sent one of his servants here who has brought Mademoiselle[1] a little black velvet casket with half a dozen pairs of Spanish gloves for Mademoiselle Marianne, and two dozen gloves, six fans, four vanity-bags, and a purse in which were three bracelets made out of the late Monsieur de Mancini's hair. I wanted them to take the bracelets, but send back the rest. Mademoiselle Mancini laughed at me, and I think perhaps she is right. There were also some pastils and Mademoiselle de Mancini has thanked the Grand Master in a postscript to my letter."[2]

Unfortunately there is no sort of evidence to show what Hortense herself thought of her admirer at this time. Madame de Venel says nothing of her attitude. It is, of course, likely that if she had actively resented his attentions and desired them to cease, either she herself or Madame de Venel would have mentioned the fact to the Cardinal. Whether she was merely

[1] Marie.
[2] Perey, *Roman*, 400.

unresponsive or whether she actually had some sort of an understanding with the Grand Master it is impossible to say, and in any event she was young enough for it to have been likely that she was flattered and pleased by his love without thinking very seriously about it. It is curious that in her memoirs she makes scarcely any mention of the Grand Master's long and assiduous wooing.

Towards the end of this year the Cardinal was approached with a view to a marriage between Hortense and the exiled King of England, Charles II. The matter was first broached to Mazarin by one of Charles's most trusted advisers, the Abbé Walter Montagu, in a letter of the 20th of December, 1659. He informed His Eminence that by Charles's order he was about to set out with Jermyn[1] to visit him and discuss a matter of importance. "The request I have to make to you from my master," he wrote, "is that you will not promise your niece Hortense in marriage to anyone until I have had the honour of speaking to you."[2] Henrietta Maria, Queen-Mother of England, also wrote to the Cardinal at the same time intimating that she was aware of and in sympathy with her son's suit.[3] The Duke of Ormond and Charles Berkeley[4] were also sent at

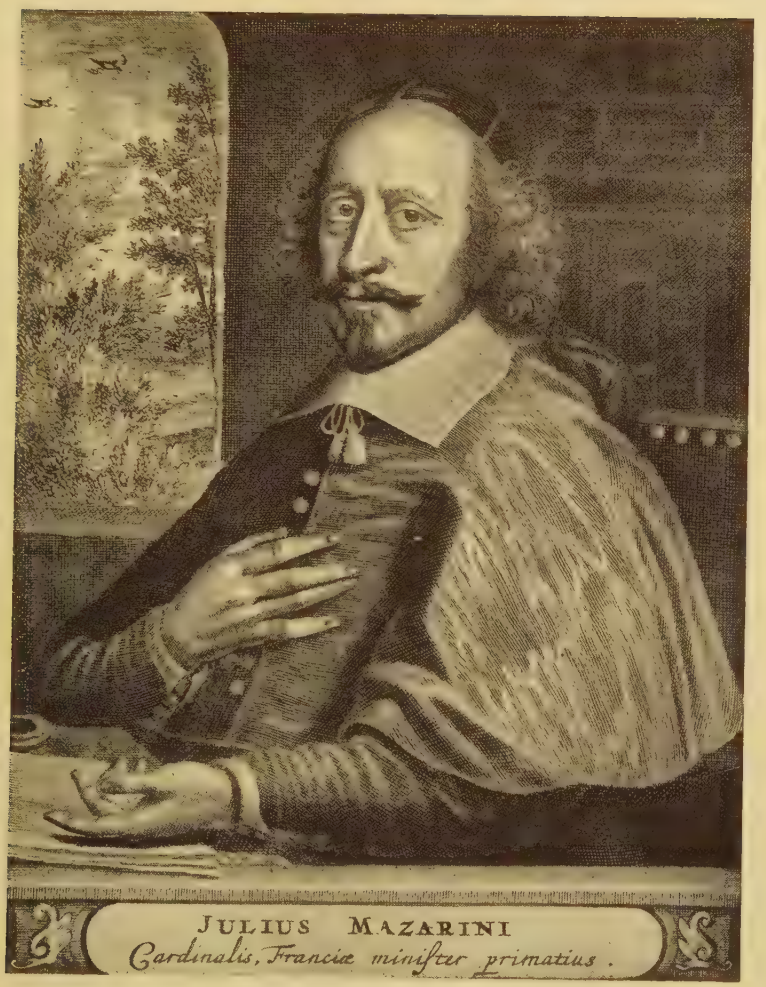
[1] Henry Jermyn, Earl of St Alban's.
[2] *C.A.*, 71, f. 188.
[3] *C.A.*, 74, f. 8.
[4] Afterwards Lord FitzHardinge and Earl of Falmouth.

various times to renew the request.[1] Berkeley was introduced to the Cardinal by St Evremond, who thus made his first appearance in Hortense's career in which later on he was to play so great a part.

During the years of the Commonwealth Mazarin had made an alliance with Cromwell, and such knowledge as he possessed of English affairs had induced in him a conviction that the exiled king would never succeed in regaining his throne. This belief must have been his true reason for refusing to hear of the match, though it has been hinted that at this time he was secretly cherishing the idea of marrying Hortense to Monsieur, the only brother of the King of France. The reason he actually gave for his refusal was the somewhat lame one that Charles must not think of honouring his niece while his own first cousin, Mademoiselle de Montpensier, "La Grande Mademoiselle," remained unmarried. The sincerity of this excuse may well be doubted, especially as Mademoiselle de Montpensier declared roundly that she had no intention of marrying Charles. She herself has left an account of the interview she had with the Cardinal on the subject.[2] His Eminence came to visit her and by way of preamble said to her: "It shall never be said that I put my own interests

[1] Des Maizeaux, *Life of St Evremond*, lxxix.

[2] *Mémoires de Mademoiselle de Montpensier*, VII, 143 et seq.



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before those of my master and all those who have the honour to be related to him. I am well aware of the difference that exists between his House and mine." After which he proceeded: "The King of England has made me a proposal to marry my niece Hortense. I replied to him that he was doing me too much honour, but that so long as any of the king's cousins-german remained unmarried, he must not think of my nieces. He would have reason to repent if he made such a mistake, and so should I if I gave my consent, for there must be some hope that he would be restored, otherwise he would never have made such a proposal to me." Mademoiselle de Montpensier thanked the Cardinal for his interest in her, but said that there was no prospect of her marrying the King of England, especially as the marriage had once been mooted and negotiations had taken place without anything coming of it. Now she was too proud to allow such a suggestion to be made to him, if he had not desired and thought of it himself. She therefore advised him to grant the king Hortense's hand. Mademoiselle asserts that on this occasion Turenne had taken up Charles's cause and had endeavoured to persuade Mazarin to grant his suit.

The Queen-Mother of England and the group of loyal adherents who surrounded her were entirely responsible for the idea of this marriage.

The Royalist party in England was by no means so favourable to the project. French influence was dreaded, and the Chancellor, Sir Edward Hyde,[1] received several intimations from Royalist correspondents that the rumours of the marriage were regarded in England with the utmost alarm. Christopher Hatton informed him that "The joy at the caresses the King now receives abroad is a little allayed by the fears some have that he should listen to a match with the Cardinal's niece."[2]

[1] Afterwards Earl of Clarendon.

[2] Bodleian. *Clarendon MSS.* Letter dated 9th March, 1660. *Cf.* also a letter from Lady E. Willoughby to "Madam Shaw" (one of Hyde's pseudonyms) in the same collection.

CHAPTER III

The return to Paris—Hortense's illness at Poitiers—The complaint of Marianne—Her rhymes to His Eminence—The monotony of the girls' life in Paris—The Grand Master pursues his suit—Strained relations between the girls and their governess—Hortense rouges her cheeks—A present from the Grand Master—Marriage of the King—Prince Charles of Lorraine—Louis XIV's sentimental pilgrimage to Brouage—The Cardinal's despicable trick—Louis receives Marie coldly—She agrees to marry Colonna—Failure of Mazarin's health—He designs to make Hortense his heiress—Her suitors—Charles II, the Duke of Savoy, Pedro II of Portugal, Turenne, two French Dukes and a Prince, the Comte de Coligny—The Grand Master succeeds at last—Simony of the Bishop of Fréjus—Marriage of Hortense—Creation of the dukedom of Mazarin—The Maréchal de Clérembaut speaks his mind—Death of the Cardinal—An ebullition of extravagance—Mazarin's will—A mock epitaph—His family's joy at his death—Hortense's comments thereon.

Mazarin's object in sending Marie and her sisters to La Rochelle had been to remove them from the proximity of the King, so now that His Majesty had come south he decided to send them back to Paris. Louis XIV's marriage to the Infanta Maria Theresa had now been definitely arranged ; but the Cardinal distrusted the impetuous and imprudent character of his niece, and was convinced that the greater distance there was

between her and her lover, the less likelihood there would be of anything unforeseen arising to disturb his carefully laid plans. Accordingly it was arranged that the young ladies should start their journey back to Paris at the end of December, despite the inclemency of the weather and the discomfort of travelling in mid-winter. Madame de Venel wrote to him asking for full instructions as to the method of life they were to adopt in Paris.[1]

The travellers reached Poitiers without any mishap, but as soon as they arrived there Hortense fell ill. "Mesdemoiselles arrived in this city yesterday in good health," wrote Madame de Venel to the Cardinal, "but this morning Mademoiselle Hortense has erysipelas on the throat and chest. I sent for the three best doctors who treated her and the slight fever she had has left her. This evening she has scarcely any rash left and her only wish at present is for a good supper, as they have given her nothing but broth all day. She can now swallow quite easily, which she could not do this morning. And so, Monseigneur, I think I can say that there is nothing much wrong with her now. She was afraid that she had scarlet fever, and is very much relieved at being assured that she has not."[2]

[1] Perey, *Roman*, 400.

[2] Madame de Venel to Mazarin, Jan. 6th, 1660. Perey, *Roman*, 405.

If her governess is to be believed Hortense was a rather difficult patient and refused to take her medicine. The Cardinal wrote to Madame de Venel when she assured him that Hortense was now on the road to recovery. "I was much perturbed at Hortense's illness, but the letters from her and you and my niece have since shown me that there was nothing to fear. As for her unwillingness to take any remedies, I have no doubt that common sense and the persuasions of her sister and yourself will overcome that."[1]

Hortense's illness detained them at Poitiers for some days, and when they were at last ready to resume their journey Marianne also fell ill, though not very seriously, for she was still able to write disrespectful little letters to her uncle and to complain to him of the ungallant behaviour of the Grand Master, who had been discourteous enough to enquire after Hortense and not after her.

Je suis en grande colère
Contre un homme qui n'a pas la fièvre
Qui est M. le grand maître,
Que quoiqu'il ne soit pas traître,
If fait faire compliment
Du mal d'Hortense seulement.
Car ayant su ma maladie
C'est à lui une grande folie,
Et je suis fort fâchée
De me voir ainsi traitée.

[1] Mazarin to Madame de Venel. Rénée, *Les Nièces de Mazarin*, 328.

Moi qui était sa bonne amie
Et qu'il m'avait fort chérie,
A cette heure plus de moi ne se soucie
Et c'est à lui grand vilenie,
Et j'ai été plus malade qu'elle
Quoi qu'elle ait eu une érysipèle.[1]

Marianne seems to have been quite as indignant at the grandiose designation given to Hortense's malady as she was at the remissness of the Grand Master. She was also of opinion that the least the Cardinal could do after hearing how she had been neglected by the Grand Master was to send a special messenger himself to enquire after her. When he did not do so she wrote and reproached him, pertly hinting that his establishment would not run to such a luxury and heading her letter "A Monsieur le Cardinal qui n'a pas un cheval." The little rhymed superscriptions she used to place on her letters to the Cardinal are deliciously impertinent. "A son Eminence qui danse en cadence," and "A son Eminence jaune qui a passé la Rhone," are two jingles characteristic of her, while one of the most amusing is the coquettish "A son Eminence grise qui m'a vue toute en chemise."

The rest of the journey was comparatively uneventful. After stopping for a day or two in Blois, where they were very graciously received by the Duc and Duchesse d'Orléans, they reached

[1] Perey, *Roman*, 410.

Paris towards the end of January. The Cardinal had intended that they should stay at the Palais Mazarin, but their apartments were not ready for them, and they were obliged to lodge at the Louvre. By Mazarin's orders they were made to live a very retired and monotonous life so that they might not become subjects for gossip. They were not allowed to receive visits from such of the younger courtiers as had remained in Paris, though they were encouraged to associate as much as possible with the elderly and respectable. They had to pay frequent duty-calls on the Queen-Mother of England and their sister Olympe's mother-in-law, the Princesse de Carignan, and they were not permitted to attend the play except under the escort of some lady of advanced years and irreproachable reputation. Luckily Mazarin had the utmost respect for the virtue and abilities of Madame Colbert, and they were allowed to see a good deal of this charming and sympathetic person, who always remained a good friend to all of them.

Hortense did not recover very quickly from her illness at Poitiers. She was never really well all this winter and was seriously ill again in March. On hearing the news the Grand Master at once sent a special messenger to enquire after her. He had become a positive thorn in the side of poor Madame de Venel. She was constantly

complaining to the Cardinal about him. "The Grand Master sent me a letter from Mademoiselle de Bonneuil for Mademoiselle Hortense. I opened it before giving it to her. I have never seen a man more assiduous in attentions, and I am often worried as to how I should receive them."[1]

All this winter relations were rather strained between the girls and their governess. Her implicit loyalty to the Cardinal, of which they had good reason to be well aware, made them regard her as a sort of a gaoler, and, as girls of their age are apt to be, they were impatient of restraint and inclined to resent her criticisms of their dancing and her continual commands to them to hold themselves properly, especially when they knew that the Cardinal's reiterated references to such matters in his letters were due to hints given to him by Madame de Venel. Often enough a letter of his would contain some such passage as the following: "You may tell Hortense that I am very satisfied with what she has written me, but she could do nothing that would please me more than to obey you implicitly and to remember the promise she made me to apply herself to learning to dance well and to make curtseys to perfection."[2] The gusto with which Madame de Venel read out

[1] Madame de Venel to Mazarin, 7th March, 1660. Perey, *Roman*, 449.

[2] Perey, *Roman*, 395, 400, etc.

this message to Hortense may well be imagined. But if the very essence of the governess-spirit was to be found distilled in poor Madame de Venel, it should not be forgotten that every naughtiness of which the schoolgirl is capable was to be found exemplified in one or other of her charges.

Hortense it was who gave Madame de Venel most trouble. She insisted upon putting rouge on her cheeks, thereby scandalizing her governess, though not so much, it would appear, because she was a little young to indulge in such adventitious aids to beauty as because such frivolity was unbecoming so soon after the death of the Duc d'Orléans, which had taken place soon after their arrival in Paris.

The girls' letters to the Cardinal were full of complaints about the severity and the disagreeable temper of their governess, but the truth was that they had driven the poor woman nearly mad. She was beginning to feel that the responsibility of looking after them was too much for her. She frankly admitted to the Cardinal that she no longer had any sort of authority over them, and besought him to use his influence to bring them to obedience. It would be useless, she informed him, merely to throw out suggestions; he must lay positive commands on them because they never took hints. She had begun to long for the time when she could hand them over again to the

Cardinal himself. "Mesdemoiselles begin to be so depressed or rather bad-tempered, particularly Mademoiselle Hortense, that I pray God with all my heart that something will be settled so that she can return to you."[1]

To add to the unfortunate woman's anxieties the Grand Master was still being importunate. Once more he had sent the young ladies one of his lavish presents. "To-day the Grand Master sent Mesdemoiselles Montpellier sachets, Cyprian powder,[2] and pastils, and as the gift seemed to me too good, I told the gentleman who brought it that the Grand Master was wrong to put me in this embarrassing position and that I did not wish him to present it. He advanced so many arguments that I think I shall have to let him do it, especially as Your Eminence has never done me the honour to give me an answer in this matter when I have written to you about it."[3] As a matter of fact the present turned out to be still more elaborate than Madame de Venel had suspected, and she suggested in her next letter that it would be well if the Cardinal himself would speak to the Grand Master about it.[4] But the Cardinal did not feel disposed to interfere. It seems probable that for various

[1] Percy, *Roman*, 472.

[2] Cyprian or Cyprus powder was a powder made of oak-moss, sprinkled with rose water and scented with musk and civet.

[3] Perey, *Roman*, 476.

[4] Perey, *Roman*, 477.

reasons he had already changed his mind about the Grand Master, and was already beginning to look with favour on his suit.

In June of this year the King's marriage took place at St Jean de Luz, and shortly after the Court prepared to return to Paris. Hortense and Marianne were transported with joy at the idea that their long exile was coming to an end at last, and threw themselves with ardour and delight into the entrancing task of making ready for their coming appearance at Court. In a rare access of generosity their uncle gave orders that the best dressmakers in Paris were to supply them with the most magnificent dresses that taste could devise or money could buy. The unfortunate Marie was on the other hand plunged into the depths of despair. She had not even succeeded in saving her pride, as she had wished to do, by being married before the King. Prince Charles of Lorraine had been paying her his addresses, and, although she did not love him, she liked him well enough and would have married him had she been permitted to do so.

But the Cardinal was now definitely resolved that at all costs she must not be allowed to remain in France. A certain incident had filled him with alarm by showing him that the King was still in love with Marie. Despite all remonstrances His Majesty had insisted on leaving his wife on the

homeward journey and had turned aside to pay a sentimental pilgrimage to Brouage, where he had occupied Marie's apartments in the Château and had gone for long solitary walks along the seashore to indulge in his romantic sorrow. For this reason the necessity for Marie's marriage to the Constable Colonna and her consequent relegation to Italy seemed to the Cardinal to be more clearly indicated than ever.

To bring his desires about he employed one of the meanest and most despicable artifices that could well be devised. With the aid of the Queen-Mother and the vindictive Comtesse de Soissons, who had never forgiven Marie for supplanting her in the King's affections, and was prepared therefore to do her almost any injury, he succeeded in convincing Louis that Marie had already forgotten him in her new-found love for Prince Charles of Lorraine. Beyond that of political necessity there can be no excuse for such base misrepresentation, for better than anyone else the Cardinal was aware of the real nature of Marie's feelings for Prince Charles. The damnable plot succeeded admirably. The King's pride was deeply wounded by the apparent perfidy of the girl he still adored, and when she came to Fontainebleau with her sisters to greet him on his return, he received her with coldness and disdain. Believing that his former love for her was dead, Marie was struck to

the heart. The ensuing days were torture to her, and when she was forced to witness the triumphal entry into Paris of the Queen, who, she believed, had stolen her lover from her, she could stand no more. The very next day she informed the Cardinal that she would accede to his wishes and marry the Constable Colonna. Far from desiring to remain in France, her only wish now was to leave the country in which she had once known happiness and now knew only despair.

His long sojourn in the marshy district where the Peace of the Pyrenees had been negotiated and the constant hard work and anxiety had played havoc with the Cardinal's never robust health, and when he returned to Paris he knew that he had not long to live. He had accomplished all that he had set out to do : he had given peace to France both without and within, and he had established the royal authority on so firm a foundation that it could scarcely be shaken. He had earned the right to spend the remainder of his short time on this earth in arranging his private affairs. There was one thing he was most anxious to accomplish before his death, and that was the marriage of his favourite niece, Hortense, whom he had decided to make his heiress. He had always been fonder of her than of any of his other nieces. She herself says that she cannot imagine why, unless it was because she was younger " and so

the less faulty," or that he saw something in her humour that pleased him better.[1] For his sole remaining nephew, Philippe, he had an intense dislike, though he had been fond of the two other boys, Paul, who had been mortally wounded during the Fronde, and Alphonse, a most promising lad, of whose intelligence he had had a very high opinion, and whom he had designed to train as his successor. Unfortunately the boy had died as a result of an accident at school. Some of the boys were amusing themselves by tossing one another in a blanket, and one of the weaklier ones, the little Abbé d'Harcourt, had dropped his corner, so that Alphonse had fallen to the ground and shattered his skull. To the Cardinal's disgust Philippe seemed to be utterly devoid of ambition of any sort. Ambition was the great Cardinal's god, and it is easy to understand that he had little use for a nephew who was a poet and a dreamer, and who preferred an indolent and Epicurean existence to war or politics. The vivacity and spirit of Hortense seemed to him far more promising.

Young as she was, Hortense had already for some time been a figure of some importance in the marriage-market, and the number of her suitors was considerable.[2] The question of marrying her

[1] *Mazarin Memoirs*, 12.

[2] The following information regarding Hortense's suitors is chiefly derived from Pitaval's *Causes Célèbres et Intéressantes*, 1753, t. XIV.

to Charles II was again revived shortly after the Restoration. The Cardinal's eagerness now showed that his real reason for his former refusal had been his distrust of the King's ability to regain his throne. He now intimated that his consent would be forthcoming together with a dowry of 20,000,000 livres. In the opinion of Henrietta Maria, who to her cost knew something of the reluctance of the English people to trust their sovereign with large sums of money, this private fortune would help to consolidate his position and render him comparatively independent of the caprices of his Parliaments, and it was mainly with the object of persuading him to accept this financially magnificent offer that she visited him in England shortly after his restoration.[1] Whether because of the charms of Hortense or the charms of her fortune, it is said that Charles would have been nothing loth, but his advisers chose to think otherwise. Hyde had been forewarned of the English dread of French interference in their domestic affairs and was aware that this marriage would be generally regarded merely as a prelude to the establishment of French influence. He accordingly represented to Charles that it would be inconsistent with his dignity to marry a lady who had been refused to him in the days of his exile. This sage advice

[1] Des Maizeaux, *Life of St Evremond*, lxxx. *Mémoires de Madame de Motteville*, IV, 227.

did not fall upon deaf ears, and the Cardinal's belated offer was rejected.

Charles II was not Hortense's only royal suitor. Abortive negotiations had taken place for her marriage with the Duke of Savoy, and she had also been wooed by a Portuguese Prince, who was practically bound in a short time to succeed his brother who was in very delicate health and expected to die at any minute. But this affair also came to nothing and the young man had to console himself by returning to his country and ultimately becoming King of it under the title of Pedro II. In this instance the motive for Mazarin's refusal was obvious enough, for Portugal was at this time at war with Spain, and the marriage would have frustrated Mazarin's desire for peace between France and Spain.

Mazarin was by no means set upon a royal alliance for Hortense. The most illustrious nobles of France were given to understand that they also might compete for the honour of her hand. The sole condition attached was that, as Hortense was to be the Cardinal's heiress, the successful suitor would have to take the name and arms of Mazarin. The Cardinal even went so far as to offer his niece to the elderly Turenne. But besides that Turenne had a most illustrious name which he was naturally reluctant to shed, he was wise enough to realize that there was too

great a gap between his fifty years and her fifteen. He declined the honour therefore on the ground that the young lady herself showed no sign of being attracted to him, which was perfectly true, since she besought her uncle not to marry her to the elderly general.

Various other gentlemen were then considered. One of them, the Duc de la Feuillade, did not scruple to say that he would rather die than accept the Cardinal's offer. His hatred and contempt for Mazarin made it quite impossible for him ever to assume a name which he had always regarded with detestation. The Duc de Candale actually did die, though not, so far as can be ascertained, as a direct result of the Cardinal's proposal. Son and heir of the powerful Duc d'Épernon, he was one of the noblest-born and at the same time one of the richest young men of his day. But his good looks and his exquisite elegance made it easy for him to obtain love of a very different nature from that inspired by his eligibility, and he displayed the utmost reluctance to marriage. When a fever carried him off at Lyons, he was mourned by many fair ladies, either because they had enjoyed his favours in the past, or because they had hoped to enjoy them in the future.

For a brief space the Cardinal seems to have toyed with the idea of marrying his heiress to the Prince de Courtenay, the last representative of

a decayed branch of the Royal House of Capet, descended from the youngest son of King Louis the Fat. If this project had matured, it was Mazarin's intention to have Courtenay recognized as a Prince of the Blood.[1] But on due reflection he came to the conclusion that blue blood should be set off with yellow gold, and the last Prince de Courtenay did not possess a brass farthing. Since the Cardinal regarded poverty as the most contemptible of vices, he decided that, in spite of his illustrious lineage, the Prince was not after all a fit husband for his niece.

The Comte de Coligny actually received the offer of Hortense's hand. In this instance the Cardinal was guided entirely by political considerations. He hoped by this marriage to detach him from the service of his inveterate enemy Condé, just as he had won over the Prince de Conti by marrying him to Anne Marie Martinozzi. But Coligny, though at the time when the offer was made he was the Cardinal's prisoner at Calais, was loyal to his friend, and refused, saying that he would never abandon the Prince in his misfortunes. He lived to hate Condé, but never regretted his magnanimity. "I did my duty," he said, "and I do not repent of it."[2]

These tentative efforts to find a husband for

[1] *Mémoires de l'Abbé de Choisy*, I, 77.

[2] *Ibid*, I, 79 and 189.

Hortense were spread over several years, and it is improbable that her wishes were ever consulted at all in the matter. Nor is there any evidence to show that she was consulted now, when the question of her marriage had become really urgent. She herself declares that she was never dazzled at the prospect of any of the illustrious alliances that were suggested for her. But it may be that she had displayed some preference for her ardent admirer, the Grand Master ; for, although Mazarin had sworn that he would never countenance her marriage to him, he suddenly revoked his decision, and gave his consent. It was said that the sinister Bishop of Fréjus, whom he was wont to consult in such matters, played a great part in influencing him to change his mind, and very unpleasant rumours were current concerning a transaction supposed to have taken place between him and Hortense's suitor.[1] The story ran that the Grand Master had promised the Bishop 50,000 crowns if he could bring about the match. But the Bishop had suddenly conceived the notion that he would prefer the bishopric of Évreux to the money, and had returned his bond to the Grand Master on the understanding that he would persuade the King to advance him to this benefice. The King, however, in spite of the Grand Master's request, thought fit to dispose of the bishopric

[1] St Evremond, *Œuvres*, 1739, V, 219.

elsewhere, and the Grand Master refused to pay the money instead, alleging that he was no longer in a position to do so ; and so the poor Bishop had none. Hortense herself, at any rate in after years, affected to believe the story of the simony of the Bishop of Fréjus and of her husband's ignominious part in the affair, but the Grand Master himself always strenuously denied that there was any truth in the tale.[1]

Howsoever it may have been obtained, the Cardinal's consent to the marriage was given readily enough. He was now very near to his end, and it was in his sick-room at Vincennes that the betrothal ceremony took place on the 28th of February, 1661. He could not, of course, be present at the wedding, which was celebrated a few days later in the chapel of the Palais Mazarin. A magnificent banquet was held afterwards and His Majesty graced it with his presence. The newly-married couple at the Cardinal's request, or rather command, took his name and were henceforth known as the Duc and Duchesse Mazarin. It is said that in the draft of the patent for the creation of the dukedom that was submitted to the Cardinal the title was originally written Duc de Mazarin, and that Mazarin himself struck out the honorific particle.[2]

[1] Pitaval, *Causes Célèbres*, t. XIV, 341, *Mazarin Memoirs*, 15.
[2] Forneron, *Louise de Keroualle*, 97.

The marriage caused something of a stir, and many considered it eminently unsuitable. The Maréchal de Clérembaut was one of those who did not scruple to speak his mind. When on the day after the wedding he was informed by the doctors that the Cardinal was better, he ejaculated : " He is a dead man : he has married his niece to Monsieur Mazarin ; his brain is disordered, his head is affected, he is a dead man."[1] It is not on record whether the gallant Maréchal ever produced any other equally veracious prophecies, or whether this was his solitary appearance as a seer.

Cardinal Mazarin did not live long enough to see how the marriage would turn out. He died only a few days later, on the 10th of March, 1661, his end, so at least Hortense avers, being indubitably hastened by his hearing of an ebullition of extravagance on the part of herself and her sisters, when they cast three hundred pistoles out of the windows of the Palais Mazarin, merely for the pleasure of seeing the grooms and lackeys in the courtyard scramble and fight for them.[2] It was not by such means that Mazarin himself had built up the gigantic fortune of which he died possessed. Various computations have been made of his vast wealth, but they vary to such a degree

[1] St Evremond, *Œuvres*, 1739, III, 264.

[2] *Mazarin Memoirs*, 16.

that it would be unwise to attempt to make a definite statement on the subject. Besides the enormous amount of actual cash in his coffers there were the emoluments of the countless governments, offices, and benefices held by him, to say nothing of his superb collections of pictures, sculpture, tapestries, furniture, and jewels. The Cardinal left minor legacies of jewels and furniture to the King, the Queen-Mother, and other members of the royal family. He also left considerable legacies to his nieces and to some of his friends, and to his nephew Philippe, who inherited his duchies of Nivernais and Donzi, he left half the Palais Mazarin, and his palace in Rome.[1] The Cardinal was also able to benefit his relatives considerably by disposing in their favour of all the numerous offices in his disposition. Charges of all sorts were showered upon his nephew and the husbands of his nieces. Philippe received the governments of Brouage, La Rochelle, and Aunis.[2] But it was to Hortense and her husband that he left by far the greater part of his fortune, amounting to some twenty-eight million livres.[3] To them also was given the better half of the Palais Mazarin,

[1] Philippe took the title of Duc de Nevers, and his portion of the Palais Mazarin was henceforth known as the Hôtel de Nevers.

[2] *Mémoires de Mademoiselle de Montpensier*, VIII, 55.

[3] According to the Duc de St Simon (*Mémoires*, XXIII, 203), this was the amount proved in open court to have been inherited by the Duc and Duchesse Mazarin.

containing an almost priceless collection of works of art of all descriptions.

The pamphleteers of the period could not be expected to refrain from making capital out of Mazarin's testamentary dispositions. Most of all his choice of a stranger as his heir gave rise to ribald comment. A mock-epitaph makes witty allusion to the surname of La Porte borne by the Cardinal's heir.

> Jules fut fin, je vous le dis
> Quand il en usa de la sorte,
> Car pour entrer en Paradis
> Il laissa son nom a la Porte.[1]

His family felt no grief at his death. Hortense relates that when the news was brought to them her brother and sister turned to each other and exclaimed : " God be thanked he is gone."[2] Such feelings in Marie and Philippe are understandable, if not wholly excusable. However much the Cardinal's treatment of her may have benefited France, Marie herself can hardly have been expected to show any gratitude for it. To Philippe too he had shown harshness rather than affection, having confined him for a considerable time in a fortress as a virtual prisoner for an offence which he had carefully avoided committing. He was supposed to have been of the debauch at

[1] Quoted by Rénée, *Les Nièces de Mazarin.*

[2] *Mazarin Memoirs*, 16.

Roissy when certain gay young sparks had said the Black Mass in Holy Week and indulged in divers other reprehensible practices, although as a matter of fact he had withdrawn from the party as soon as he had discovered its nature. But Olympe, Hortense, and Marianne had far less cause to hate the Cardinal. True, he was a severe and tyrannical task-master, and was constantly nagging at them. "One of the things which most displeased him in us," says Hortense, "was the want of devotion. You cannot imagine how much he was discontented at it. He left no arguments untried to induce us to have more. On a time complaining that we did not frequent Church every day, he said we had neither piety nor honour. 'At least,' said he, 'if you will not do it for God's sake, do it for the world's sake.'" [1]

Hortense herself confesses that she was not in the least afflicted at his passing. "And it is a remarkable thing," she adds, "that a man of that merit, that all his life had laboured to raise and enrich his family, should never receive other thanks from them, than apparent signs of hatred and aversion even after his death." [2] In extenuation of this apparent lack of charity it should be remembered that the benefits conferred by Mazarin on his family were never disinterested; he himself

[1] *Mazarin Memoirs*, 12.
[2] *Ibid*, 17.

was always the greatest gainer by them. His feelings for them consisted not so much in the affection of an uncle for his nieces, as in the sort of friendly and indulgent satisfaction which a skilled workman has in his tools.

CHAPTER IV

The treasures of the Palais Mazarin—Character of the Duc Mazarin—Marriage of Marie—Madame de la Fayette's description of Hortense—The machinations of an Italian eunuch—Jealousy of Mazarin—The Rohan incident—The Duc keeps Hortense away from Paris—His lack of consideration for her—He quarrels with his father—His extraordinary eccentricity—His visions—His household draws lots—His strange prudery—The story of the statues—Belated modesty of Louis XIV—Mazarin's law-suits—He resigns his offices—A possible psychological explanation of his mentality—The failure of the Mazarin marriage inevitable—Affection of Louis XIV for Mazarin—The opinions of St Simon and Madame de Sévigné.

After the Cardinal's death the Duc and Duchesse Mazarin took up their residence in the Palais Mazarin where they lived in great magnificence. Glorious treasures filled the palace, for the Cardinal had spent huge sums of money in the purchase of works of art, and, as his taste in such things was exquisite, his pictures, statues, and tapestries vied with, if they did not actually surpass, those belonging to the King himself. The finest painters of the Italian school were represented in the collection, which boasted several examples of Titian, Correggio, Andrea del Sarto, Raphael, Veronese, and even that rarest of masters, Giorgione. When Charles I's famous collection was sold by order of the Commonwealth government,

THE DUC MAZARIN
Victoria & Albert Museum

THE DUCHESSE MAZARIN
Talbot Hughes Collection

[*face p. 68*

Mazarin had bought several of the pictures of outstanding merit through a German banker, one Jabach.

Amid such surroundings the Duc and Duchesse seem to have lived fairly happily for a brief while Although Mazarin was considerably older than his wife, having been born in the year 1632, he was not at this time an unattractive husband even for so youthful a bride. He was handsome in appearance and made the most of himself by dressing with elegance and taste. His manners were courtly, his wit by no means negligible, and his knowledge of literature and art worthy of notice even in that cultured age. At this stage of his career he showed but little sign of the abnormal temperament he was soon to develop. One person and one alone seems to have had any notion of the lurking weakness within his nature. This was his own father, who, when the marriage was first mooted and the Cardinal informed him of the design he had to place the control of his vast fortune in the hands of Hortense's future husband, had earnestly besought him not to put upon his son this heavy burden, which he was convinced he was not strong enough nor stable enough to sustain.[1]

Marie's marriage to the Constable Colonna was now definitely arranged, and she stayed with her sister in the Palais Mazarin until the wedding

[1] *Mêmoires de St Simon* XXIII 202-203.

took place in April. The Duc and Duchesse Mazarin devised superb festivities in her honour and on the 9th of April gave to the Marquis Angelelli, Colonna's proxy at the ceremony, a magnificent banquet at which the King himself was present.

The young Duchesse Mazarin was a great favourite. She was, says Madame de la Fayette, one of the most perfect beauties at the Court of France. Nothing in fact was lacking to her except wit; but this is scarcely surprising in a girl of her age, and it is known from other sources that she developed it later on. At present she made up for her lack of vivacity by "a languishing and negligent air," which did not fail to find admirers for her.[1] Some were inclined to place the King himself among their number; for it was whispered that his constant visits to the Palais Mazarin were induced less by the attractions of Marie Mancini, than by those of the newly-married Duchesse.

Hortense denies that the King ever showed undue admiration for her, but his attentions appear to have been sufficiently marked to have aroused jealousy in her husband and to have caused a certain amount of discord. According to Hortense rumours anent the Duc's jealousy of

[1] Madame de la Fayette, *Histoire de Madame Henriette d'Angleterre*, 1779, 39.

the King were maliciously spread about by a certain Italian eunuch who had formerly been in the service of the Cardinal and had been employed by him in some of his less reputable business. This individual, finding his occupation gone at His Eminence's death, had endeavoured to attach himself in a similar capacity to Hortense. "But, besides that my own genius made me a stranger to all sorts of intrigues," she says, "Monsieur Mazarin kept too strict an eye over all my actions. He, enraged at this obstacle, took a resolution to be revenged of Monsieur Mazarin himself." Accordingly he went to the King and told him that as a loyal servant of the Mazarin family he felt that it was incumbent upon him to reveal to His Majesty the cruel severity with which the Duc was using his young wife. He was, so the eunuch alleged, jealous of everyone, especially of His Majesty himself. Moreover, he took upon himself the airs of a great minister and had threatened to banish all the Italians from Paris. Louis XIV was not in the least perturbed by these revelations and replied that, even if what he said was true, the Duc Mazarin was mad and that though he had inherited Cardinal Mazarin's wealth he had not his power.[1]

Why Hortense should have gone to the trouble of endeavouring to prove that her husband was

[1] *Mazarin Memoirs*, 20.

not jealous of the King it is difficult to say, for she is most emphatic in stating that he was jealous of everyone else in the world. So acute, indeed, was his jealousy that quite early in their married life he managed by a stratagem to introduce into Hortense's household a woman named Madame de Ruz to spy upon her continually and report her smallest actions to him.[1] Hortense declares that she never gave her husband any cause for jealousy; but as she started her married life with an indiscretion about which she herself in her memoirs is discreetly silent, there may be more justification for her husband's attitude than would appear on the surface. Only a few weeks after the marriage he had intercepted a somewhat amorous note written by Hortense to the Chevalier de Rohan. This he had at once placed in the King's hands. Louis XIV took the matter up himself and administered a severe scolding to the frivolous Hortense. He wrote to the Bishop of Fréjus on the subject from Fontainebleau on the 21st of April, 1661. "I have already done all that you tell me was necessary. I am extremely displeased at what has happened, but I hope that the person of whom you speak will behave herself better in the future than she has done in the past. I was already aware of all the talk there has been, and I assure you that what pains me most is the

[1] *Mazarin Memoirs*, 20.

thought that a person who bears the name of so great a man should give everyone cause to laugh at her."[1]

Mazarin's jealousy was not, however, always as well founded as it certainly was in this instance. He was inordinately jealous of all who came near his wife. If she so much as spoke to a servant he was dismissed the next day, and she did not even dare to show a marked liking for any of her women for fear of having them taken away from her. Any gentleman who ventured to address to her anything beyond the mere formal compliments of courtesy was immediately forbidden the house, and she was not allowed to drive out alone in her own carriage lest she should meet anyone of whom the Duc might feel disposed to be jealous. Truly, as she declares, he would have liked her to see no one but himself. This, in fact, was avowedly his aim and he did his best to achieve it by removing his wife from Paris as much as possible. He found excuse sufficient in declaring that he intended to devote himself seriously to his official duties in the provinces. Unfortunately for Hortense the Cardinal had loaded him with offices and governorships in all parts of the kingdom, so that he had no difficulty in keeping her almost always out of Paris and away from the allurements of the Court.

[1] *Œuvres de Louis XIV*, V, 14-15.

The Duc Mazarin was Governor both of Alsace and Brittany besides holding many minor posts in other districts, such as the governorship of Vincennes, and he spent his time journeying from one to another of his governments, dragging his wife with him from Maine to Nevers, from Alsace to Brittany. Hortense contends that, as he never allowed her to see anyone but himself when they were in Paris, she would not have resented this constant voyaging, in which there was at least some variety, if her husband had only shown a spark of consideration for her.[1] But he had no regard for her health; even when she was about to have a child he would insist upon her travelling enormous distances and lodging in rough inns and primitive cottages. And it was not rarely that she was in such a condition. During the seven years that she spent with her husband she gave birth to four children, three daughters and a son.

Jealousy seems to have been Armand Mazarin's sole reason for this extraordinary conduct, and the mode of life he had adopted served to intensify rather than to decrease his suspicions. Scarcely anyone now dared even address a word to Hortense. He did all in his power to prevent her seeing any of her family, especially her brother, the Duc de Nevers, upon whose affection for her he chose to place the most discreditable

[1] *Mazarin Memoirs*, 22 et seq.

interpretation. When his own family in pity began to take her part, he forbade her to see them either. He raised the most violent commotion when on one occasion while he was taking the waters at Bourbon his father on the advice of the doctors refused to let his wife join him. On receiving the message the Duc first of all swooned with rage; then, as soon as he had recovered himself, he sent a succession of couriers protesting against the outrage that was being done him, until the old Maréchal was forced to give in and send Hortense to him. When she arrived he turned all his rage on to her, flatly refusing to believe that it was his own father that had kept her from him and maintaining that she had not come before because she preferred to enjoy herself rather than to solace him in his sickness.[1]

This prodigious jealousy coupled with the control of the enormous Mazarin fortune gradually brought about the result that the old Maréchal de la Meilleraye had feared. Something in the Duc's brain gave way and he began to indulge in the most astonishing eccentricities.[2] As often happens in such cases his mind was at once attracted to questions of religion and morality. Many stories are told of his insensate behaviour, some of them almost too obviously characteristic to be true.

[1] *Mazarin Memoirs*, 26.

[2] *Mémoires de l'Abbé de Choisy*, I, 79.

He would wander about the country from one village to another, like a strolling priest, propounding some strange and original catechism of his own. He also insisted that he saw visions and would awaken his unfortunate wife in the middle of the night to tell her about them. Nor was she the only person who was afflicted with such crazy recitals. The King himself was also a victim and could not easily escape since Mazarin had the right of access to him at all times. On one occasion he demanded a special audience with His Majesty in order to make it known to him that while he was partaking of the sacrament in the morning his conscience had suddenly commanded him to inform the King of the scandal which he was causing among his subjects by his immoral relations with Mademoiselle de La Vallière. Another time it was actually the Archangel Gabriel who had appeared to him and charged him to convey a similar message to His Majesty. Louis XIV contented himself with making the very natural reply that he had for a long time suspected that the Duc was not quite right in the head, but that now he was quite certain of it.[1]

One of Mazarin's most remarkable peculiarities was a persistent inclination to leave to God those things upon which it is usually considered to be man's task here on earth to exercise his frail human

[1] *Mémoires de St Simon*, XXIII, 205.

judgment. For instance, he would on occasion compel his servants to draw lots for their places in his household on the ground that God could decide better than either he or they for what tasks they were best fitted.[1] The consequence was that at times his cook would temporarily become his steward, while the man who scrubbed the floors would find himself the ducal secretary. Occasionally, of course, there would be protests. When one of the footmen was suddenly informed that Providence had decided that he was forthwith to become a cook, he pleaded to his master that he knew nothing whatever of the kitchen. "Providence will see to that," the Duc assured him, "you would not have been summoned to the post of cook without being provided with the necessary talents."

Mazarin's belief that all that happened was divinely ordained was sometimes carried to strange lengths. When there was a fire at one of his country-houses, he drove away those who hastened to extinguish the conflagration, railing upon them for daring to oppose the will of God made manifest.[2]

Passing strange were his new-born notions of decency. It is said that the most amazing

[1] Pitaval, *Causes Célèbres*, XIV, 341. *Mémoires de St Simon*, XXIII, 206.

[2] *Mémoires de St Simon*, XXIII, 207.

regulations were made by him for the people on his estates. Women and girls were forbidden to milk cows lest they might become inspired with gross thoughts and were given instructions to assume modest attitudes when spinning or making butter. The Duc himself is supposed to have drawn up a guide for apothecaries' apprentices to enable them to execute with propriety some of the more disagreeable tasks that were inevitable in the exercise of their duties.[1] No doubt there is some exaggeration in these stories, and more than exaggeration in the legend that he desired to have his own daughters' front teeth removed in order to make them less attractive and therefore less prone to fall into sinful ways. No credit is likely to be given to the tale that he once conceived the notion that he had been turned into a tulip and insisted upon being placed in the sun and regularly watered; but even this is really not much more difficult to believe than the absolutely authentic history of the fate of the statues in the Palais Mazarin.

The Duc's new-found prudery caused him to be seized with an inexorable prejudice against the nude in art. Although the sacred pictures and

[1] *Mémoires de St Simon*, XXIII, 207. St Evremond, *Œuvres*, 1739, V, 236, *Réponse au Plaidoyé de Mr Evard*. This document contains accounts of further eccentricities on the part of the Duke, which it would be difficult to couch in tactful and acceptable terms. There is also a satirical poem by St Evremond on the same subject: *Réglemens de Monsieur le Duc Mazarin*.

tapestries in his collection were always treated by him with the deepest respect and the most scrupulous care, some of the finest tapestries in the Palais Mazarin were lacerated by his order simply because they contained naked figures, while priceless pictures by Titian and Correggio were defaced for the same reason. But these were merely preliminaries to his great campaign against the statues.

Cardinal Mazarin had left one of the most superb collections of statuary ever known. Its worth was conservatively computed at 150,000 livres. The most marvellous examples of antique sculpture had been sought for and procured from all over Europe. His Eminence had spared neither time, trouble, nor money in gathering together the collection. He was ever a lover of beautiful things and had remarked when the first consignment of statues arrived from Italy that these were the only Italian relations he would want with him in France. He changed his mind later on, perchance when he was told that his nieces promised to be more beautiful than any statues that money could buy.

The nudity of many of the four hundred statues that the Palais Mazarin was supposed to contain became an offence to the Duc Mazarin, and he determined that they must no longer be suffered to shock his own modesty or pollute the minds of

others who beheld them. What exactly was the motive in his diseased mind only a psychologist could explain. Many years later during the great lawsuit between the Duc and his wife, Sachot, the Duchesse's counsel, pertinently enquired : " Etoit ce charité pour la fragilité des autres ou défiance de la sienne ? "

Brooding over the problem of the statues the Duc went to bed one evening at Vincennes, where he then happened to be staying. In the middle of the night he suddenly woke up with a resolve fully formed, though whether by his own conscience or with the assistance of the Archangel Gabriel he never vouchsafed to relate. Hastily rising he set off for Paris, and having started at dawn reached the Palais Mazarin early enough in the morning to find the custodian of the Mazarin treasures, Monsieur Tourolles, still abed. In spite of the worthy man's protests he hauled him out of bed and forced him to unlock one of the galleries. Into this he penetrated accompanied by a stone-mason provided with the implements of his trade. Himself he armed with a heavy hammer and forthwith began his self-imposed task of rendering the naked statues more decent, bidding his companion to follow his example. As soon as Tourolles realized what was going on he started to remonstrate with his master, representing to him the value both artistic and financial of the

property he was engaged in destroying. But Mazarin was not to be deterred by arguments or appeals or even by tears, and the ruthless work proceeded to the accompaniment of the sobbing of the grief-stricken Tourolles. Without any respite, the mutilation of the statues continued all day until the Duc was absolutely forced through sheer exhaustion to take a rest.

At seven o'clock Colbert, having been hastily apprised of what was toward, arrived at the palace and went to inspect the havoc. Although horror-struck, he was obliged to inform the tearful Tourolles that he was completely powerless to take any immediate action Mazarin might be mad and probably was ; but he was also one of the most illustrious noblemen in France, and no one could stop him from dealing as he wished with his own property, save possibly the King himself. He thought the best course would be for him to hasten away and report to His Majesty what had happened.

Meanwhile Mazarin had supped calmly and was feeling much refreshed after his rest and ready to return with renewed energy to his labours. But he soon found that the statues demanding attention were more numerous than he had thought, and he felt that one companion alone would not suffice to complete the work. And so he pressed five or six lackeys into the service, armed them

with hammers, and himself once again led the noble assault against nudity. Suddenly above the smashing of the hammers and the crash of falling marble a clock was heard to strike the twelve hours of midnight. Mazarin immediately threw his hammer to the ground and commanded his myrmidons to do likewise. The Lord's day had begun.

And it was very fortunate that it was Sunday, for Mazarin's rigid respect for the inviolability of the Sabbath forbade any further mutilations until Monday morning, and in the meantime the King was enabled to place a guard in the palace with orders to permit no more statue-smashing under pain of his grave displeasure. He also commanded an enquiry to be held into the whole circumstances of the affair, and was able to ensure that the Duc would abstain from committing any further depredations of a like nature. He could well afford to rest on his laurels; in the one day he had already done more that 400,000 francs worth of damage. The King, however, was precluded from taking a very firm stand in the matter, since it appears that at this very time he was in the Duc's debt for considerable sums of money.

It is curious to note that later in life Louis XIV himself developed a like prudery, though in a form rather less violent. On a visit to the Gobelins

factory in Paris a gentleman in the suite of Lord Manchester, English Ambassador to France in 1701, remarked several hangings sent by the King to have nudities cut out or covered up. " The Work-man answer'd, when I reflected on the King's scrupulous Impotence, *That there were four Seasons in the Year.*"[1] Louis XIV had indeed changed in the autumn of his age, and the thumb of the austere Madame de Maintenon is clearly discernible in this belated manifestation of modesty on his part.

Statue-smashing was by no means the only pleasure devised for Mazarin by his ingenious conscience. Another foible it led him into was a perfect passion for litigation. He is said to have contested some three hundred suits during his lifetime—and to have lost nearly all of them. He openly rejoiced when suits regarding Mazarin property were brought against him, since he chose to consider that he had no moral right to his vast possessions derived from the Cardinal's ill-gotten gains. A decision given by the Court in his favour would, he said, clarify his conscience in regard to the particular property in question, while he would accept an adverse decision as a just retribution from Heaven.[2] Scruples of conscience also made him divest himself of many of the offices he held.

[1] *A View of Paris*, 1701, p. 54.

[2] *Mémoires de l'Abbé de Choisy*, I, 81.

According to Mademoiselle de Montpensier his religious feelings were successfully played upon by the Duchesse de Longueville to induce him to resign the post of Grand Master of the Artillery, which she wanted for her son.[1]

Such was the man whom Hortense had married, and it is scarcely to be wondered at that she soon began to find life with him completely impossible. But she could never hope to escape from him on the score of his insanity ; for if there were times when he appeared to be positively mad, there were also times when he seemed to be perfectly rational. There is no reason to believe that the Duc Mazarin was ever actually insane. He was simply unbalanced on certain subjects, and his peculiarities can be explained as by no means unusual psychological phenomena. Into the roots and origins of his disorder it is not at this long distance of time possible, or even, since it is largely a medico-psychological question, desirable to go. It will be sufficient to say that fanaticism in moral matters is often a refuge for sexual longings that have been directed into the wrong channels. It is a contrasting substitute sought by those who fear to give way to what they know to be base desires. Excessive prudery such as characterized Armand Mazarin has been held to imply exactly the opposite instincts in a state

[1] *Mémoires de Mademoiselle de Montpensier*, VIII, 230.

of repression. The germ of his strange proclivities was probably always within him, but it seems not at all unlikely that Hortense's shortcomings as a wife served to precipitate his downfall.

The failure of the marriage cannot be put down wholly to Mazarin. The incident of the intercepted note to Rohan shows that there was some foundation for his jealousy, and that he erred only as to the extremities to which he pushed it. Hortense was an incurably frivolous creature and needed tactful and indulgent management of a kind of which her husband was the last person in the world to be capable. He was essentially monogamous by nature, while she was as essentially polyandrous. Thus the marriage was doomed to failure from the start. Even if Mazarin had not had the germs of mental disease within him, Hortense alone would quite probably have driven him off his head.

The actual extent to which the Duc was affected is still an open question; but it seems probable that in his manner and conversation he ordinarily showed no sign that he was subject to such grievous aberrations. Those who, like the King himself, were well aware of his eccentricities and laughed at them most, at other times held his character in the greatest esteem. Louis XIV always remained on friendly terms with him, and conferred many honours upon him, culminating in

the very highest order of chivalry, the collar of the Saint Esprit, which he bestowed on him in 1688. About that time Madame de Sévigné wrote a description of him that would lead one to suppose that he was a particularly unpleasant and repulsive type of maniac.[1] The Duc de St Simon, who also saw him late in life, noticed nothing very odd about him. He describes him as " a tall, big, healthy-looking man with plenty of wit."[2] From the evidence afforded by his career there seems to be no reason why both accounts should not have been equally accurate. There were two Mazarins. St Simon had the good fortune to see him at his best; those who appreciate the letters of Madame de Sévigné have no cause to regret that she happened to see him at his worst.

[1] *Lettres de Madame de Sévigné*, IX, 158, see postea Ch. XII.
[2] *Mémoires de St Simon*, XXIII, 207.

CHAPTER V

Hortense in desperation—Her husband seizes her jewels—Her first flight—Renewed quarrels with her husband—She is sent to the convent at Chelles—Kindness of the Abbess—Mazarin has her sent to a stricter convent—Sidonia de Lénoncourt—Pranks in the nunnery—Mazarin tries to kidnap his wife—A false alarm and its consequences—Intervention of Louis XIV—Mazarin does not adhere to his bargain—The Courcelles scandal—Hortense's flight with Rohan—Extraordinary behaviour of Mazarin—What Charles II thought about the flight—Courbeville—Hortense's "accident"—The journey through Switzerland—Quarrels among her attendants—Hortense meets the Colonnas—Her rudeness to Marie—Nevers joins them in Milan—His quarrel with Courbeville—Hortense creates a scandal in Milan—Mazarin proceeds against Nevers and Rohan—Hortense quarrels with and leaves the Colonnas—Flight of Courbeville—He is captured and imprisoned—Hortense retires into a convent again—Her escape—Marie explains to Colbert—Hortense's life in Rome—Her lovers—Jacques de Belboeuf—A miniature of Hortense.—She pawns her jewels—The Marquis del Grillon redeems them for her—Her desperate straits—She decides to go to France—Hortense at Nevers—Mazarin's attempt to capture her—Her interview with Louis XIV—She returns to Rome.

As Mazarin's conduct towards her became more and more eccentric and more and more exasperating Hortense in desperation began to wonder how much longer she would be able to support the strain of living with him. That

she could ever leave him was an idea that did not come into her head until she had been married for several years ; but when it eventually did dawn upon her she found it very difficult to resist the impulse. She determined, nevertheless, to wait until he should furnish her with a sufficient pretext ; and it was not very long before one of his absurd insults gave her the provocation she desired. One day he seized possession of her jewels, and to her protestations calmly replied that he mistrusted her generous disposition and proposed to take charge of her jewelry lest she might feel inclined to give any of it away. All her remonstrances were unavailing, and this outrage decided her to abandon him forthwith. There was a communicating door between her apartments in the Palais Mazarin and the Hôtel de Nevers, the residence of her brother. Through this she made her escape and took refuge with her younger sister, Marianne, now Duchesse de Bouillon.[1] She had been married about a year after the Cardinal's death to Turenne's nephew, the Duc de Bouillon. Turenne himself had always been very anxious for this alliance, and up to the very last had without success tried to persuade the Cardinal to give his consent. After His Eminence's death Turenne had had recourse to the Bishop of Fréjus, who possessed great

[1] *Mazarin Memoirs*, 32 et seq.

influence both with the King and with the Queen-Mother and had little difficulty in persuading them to countenance the match.

Hortense's escape had been effected late at night, and on the next day a family council was called together to discuss the situation. It was then decided that the Comtesse de Soissons should acquaint the King with the true state of affairs and ask for his advice. Louis, who did not appreciate how serious the differences between Hortense and her husband had already become, was inclined to think that some accommodation might be arrived at, and suggested that Hortense should not return to her husband for a time, but should stay with Olympe at the Hôtel de Soissons while the terms for a reconciliation were being settled.

And so for two months Hortense lived apart from her husband till at length by the mediations of the friends of both parties she was induced to return to the Palais Mazarin and make a fresh attempt. But Mazarin had not taken to heart the lesson of her flight. The only precaution he took to prevent her leaving him again was to have the communicating door between her apartments and the Hôtel de Nevers walled up during her absence. In other respects he had not changed his ways, and even now when she was obliged to escape by the front-door her retreats to take

refuge from her husband in other people's houses became increasingly frequent. On some of these occasions Mazarin endeavoured to prevent her from going, and then terrible scenes would ensue. As she tried to fly he would yell frantically from the windows to the porters to close the doors so as to stop her getting out. But on beholding her tears none of them dared or cared to stand in her way. And so in a distraught state she would make her way through the streets to the Hôtel de Nevers.[1]

The constant recurrence of such scenes as these not unnaturally induced in Hortense a conviction that she could never hope to live happily again with her husband, and she therefore determined to institute an action for separation of goods against him in the Court of Requests. Mazarin was at this time about to undertake one of his periodical journeys to his government of Alsace. Hortense refused to go with him, but consented to retire into a convent during his absence. The place of retreat chosen for her was the Abbaye de Chelles, where one of her husband's aunts was Abbess. It was from here that she launched her suit in the Court of Requests.

If Hortense had expected to find the Abbess of Chelles as difficult and as eccentric as her nephew, she was destined to be agreeably disappointed; for she proved the gentlest and most considerate

[1] *Mazarin Memoirs*, 37.

of guardians, and a very real affection soon grew up between then, so much so that when Mazarin returned from Alsace he was informed by the Abbess that Hortense had been perfectly happy in the convent and that she herself was extremely contented with her conduct, which had been exemplary. With his usual perversity Mazarin was furious at this report and immediately went to the King and requested that this wife should be transferred to the far stricter nunnery of the Filles de St Marie at the Bastille. His account of Hortense's conduct at Chelles must have been exceedingly mendacious, for Louis XIV acceded to his request, and Hortense was removed from Chelles under the escort of some of His Majesty's guards just as if she had been a prisoner. And to all intents and purposes she was a prisoner, constantly watched and spied upon by the strictest, austerest, and oldest of the nuns.

The only mitigating circumstance of this confinement to Hortense was that she found there a congenial companion in the young Marquise de Courcelles, who had been relegated to a convent for very similar causes. The very resemblance in their fates must have drawn them together. Both were rich, beautiful, and unhappily married. A great heiress of noble parentage, Sidonia de Lénoncourt had been brought up in a convent near Orléans by an aunt, until Colbert, who in

his schemes for the social and financial advancement of his family had fixed upon her as a suitable bride for his younger brother, persuaded the King to send for her to Paris, where she was placed under the care of the Princesse de Carignan at the Hôtel de Soissons. But Colbert's plans went woefully amiss, for the young lady happened to attract the attention of the powerful Marquis de Louvois, one of the King's chief ministers. A disgraceful compact was made whereby she was to become Louvois' mistress while she was to be married to the fortune-hunting Marquis de Courcelles. Sidonia herself added a further complication ; since, although she was obliged to receive Louvois' amorous attentions, she never gave him her love. That honour she reserved for the fascinating Marquis de Villeroy, with whom she had a brief but exceedingly passionate love-affair. This proved to be but the first of a series of intrigues of which her husband for his own purposes affected to be unaware. But when he considered that he had gathered together enough evidence to prove her constant infidelity, he suddenly made a dramatic intervention and caused her to be shut up in a convent. For her person he cared nothing, for her fortune everything ; and he was now in a position to begin a suit to obtain entire possession of her wealth on the score of her adultery.

The lively Marquise and Hortense seem to have practiced all sorts of pranks in the nunnery. Countless tales were told at Court of their tomboy escapades. The Duchesse in her memoirs denies that there was any foundation for most of the stories, such as that they filled the holy-water stoop with ink to blacken the nuns' faces, or careered through the dormitories making hunting-noises with a pack of little dogs at their heels, though she admits that there was an element of truth in the tale that, denied facilities to wash their feet, they had filled a great oaken chest with water for the purpose, and that it had leaked through the cracks between the boards and flooded the beds of the nuns in the dormitory below.[1] This, however, she maintains was an accident pure and simple. At any rate their pranks, whether intentional or not, alarmed the nuns sufficiently for them to petition for the removal of the two unruly young ladies, who to their great delight were shortly after taken back to the Abbaye de Chelles.

The thought that his erring wife was once more to experience the kindly treatment of the Abbess of Chelles appalled the Duc Mazarin, who was convinced that what she needed was strict discipline. He hastened to the Archbishop of Paris and obtained from him an order to permit

[1] *Mazarin Memoirs*, 44 et seq.

him to enter the convent to fetch the Duchesse away. Armed with this and accompanied by an escort of sixty guards, he proceeded to the convent and demanded his wife. But he had reckoned without his aunt. The Abbess was a spirited dame with a nice sense of humour, and she handed the keys of the convent to Hortense and left her to deal with the situation as she wished. Hortense flatly refused to admit her husband and was not to be impressed by the order of the Archbishop of Paris. It was useless for him to inform her that she was not the Abbess of Chelles, she replied to him that she was—anyhow for the day. Short of battering down the doors of the convent Mazarin was powerless to do anything, and he was forced to return to Paris in high dudgeon.

Although elated at her victory, Hortense was disinclined to believe that her husband would abandon his designs so easily, and when a body of horsemen approached the convent on the following day, she was convinced that he had come to make another attempt. This time she and the fair Sidonia tried to conceal themselves by climbing through a grating in their parlour. Fortunately the strange cavaliers proved to be friends, not foes. The explanation was that the Duchesse de Bouillon had heard somewhat belatedly of Mazarin's plans and had ridden out to defend Hortense in the company of her husband, a

brother-in-law, the Comte de Soissons, and a party of friends. On hearing the news Hortense and Sidonia at once attempted to emerge from their hiding-place. Sidonia, being slender, easily slipped through, but Hortense, who was of a larger build, got stuck in the grating and it needed all the strength and persistence of her friend to extricate her.

About this time the Court of Requests decided the suit for separation of goods in favour of the Duchesse. It was decreed that the Duc Mazarin was to live at the Arsenal, his official residence, while the Duchesse was to have the Palais Mazarin with an allowance of 20,000 livres. But Mazarin was not disposed to submit tamely to the decision of a lower court. He immediately made appeal to the Great Chamber of Justice.

Matters stood thus when Louis XIV took it into his head that the time had now come for him to intervene in the dispute between the Duc and the Duchesse, for both of whom he entertained in these early days a genuine affection. By the exercise of most royal tact he at length succeeded in patching up an accommodation to which both sides were persuaded to agree. A written agreement was drawn up and signed by both the Duc and the Duchesse. The terms were that husband and wife were to occupy separate apartments in the Palais Mazarin, and that Hortense was to have

the right to select her own household with the exception of her equerry, who was to be chosen for her by Monsieur Colbert. This last provision seems to show that the King himself was not inclined to trust Hortense very far where men were concerned. The Duchesse was not to be obliged to follow the Duc on any of his journeys, and, in fact, both of them were to be free to live their own lives without any sort of interference from the other.

These terms seemed reasonable enough and looked very well on paper, but it was perhaps foolish to hope that a man of the Duc's character and temperament would be willing or even able to adhere to his side of the bargain. As it turned out he made not the slightest attempt to do so; in fact his interference in Hortense's affairs became more flagrant then ever. Alleging that he loved her so much that he was determined at all costs to prevent her from being spoiled, he began to meddle with her most innocent amusements. The more innocent they were, the more they seemed to incur his disapproval. He was constantly reprimanding her for her frivolity, telling her that it was a heinous crime to go to bed late, and that it was literally a sin to play at blindman's buff with her servants. He even managed to find fault with her manner of dressing and refused to allow her to wear patches. For her predilection

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Mignard. Hinchingbrooke

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for acting comedies in her apartments he had a particular aversion. One evening when she had arranged to give one of her favourite theatrical representations, he came on the scene at the last moment and ordered the stage to be taken down and removed on the ground that it was a holy day and a comedy was a profane diversion. Irritating as these little incidents must have been, they were after all too petty to occasion a fresh breach ; but it was not long before more serious disagreements arose.

Hortense and Sidonia de Courcelles had grown so fond of each other at the convent that when Hortense returned to the Palais Mazarin she obtained leave for Sidonia to come and live with her. No sooner was she there than somehow or other the Marquis de Courcelles managed to gain entrance to the palace during Hortense's absence, and was so successful with his arguments, persuasions, and promises that he prevailed upon his wife to be reconciled with him. When Hortense returned she found that Sidonia had eloped with her own husband.

Like most impetuous reconciliations this one did not last very long, and Sidonia was soon listening with too favourable an ear to the suit of her husband's best friend, Cavoy. When Hortense went to visit her one day she was informed that the Marquise could not receive her. The reason was not far to seek, for Cavoy's coach was standing

at the door at the time. Hortense was extremely angry, and happening to meet the Marquis de Courcelles before her rage had quite cooled, she was spiteful enough to tell him what had happened. "This foolish man of late hankered after an occasion to fight Cavoy," says Hortense, "and was loath it should be thought that he was jealous of the best of his friends, but that it was upon some other account." Through her own malicious conduct she really thoroughly deserved to be involved, as she was, in the pretext Courcelles now advanced for his quarrel with Cavoy. Courcelles pretended that he was in love with Hortense and informed everyone that his wife, to whom Hortense had entrusted some love-letters she had written to one of her admirers, had been indiscreet enough to give them to Cavoy and that he had been showing them about at Court. He, therefore, had gallantly promised the Duchesse to force Cavoy at the point of the sword to restore them to her.

According to Hortense she remonstrated with Courcelles for spreading such falsehoods, and made him admit that he had done it only in jest. What was her amazement, therefore, to hear next day that Courcelles and Cavoy had fought a duel upon those very grounds!

Even at the time nobody could say for certain whether Hortense's version of this affair was

accurate, or whether the revelations of Courcelles, though indiscreet and unchivalrous, were in fact true, and it is all the more difficult at this distance of time to unravel the truth of the matter. The Court was divided in its opinions. Hortense complained to the King of the calumnies that were being spread about her, and was assured by His Majesty that he gave no credit to any of the reports he had heard about her. "But his manner of delivering this was so succinct," she says, "and so far from the accustomed civility with which he used to hear me, that all others but myself would have doubted of the truth of what he said." Louis XIV seems to have had his doubts! The Duc Mazarin, who was always ready to think the worst of his wife, had none.[1]

Even Mazarin himself had now come to realize that his pretence of abiding by the terms of the agreement was a fantastic mockery, and he appealed to the King to tear up the papers. The Duchesse somewhat unexpectedly consented to this course, though she insisted upon exacting from the King a promise that he would never intervene in her matrimonial affairs again unasked. This promise Louis XIV gave readily enough, and the Duchesse says that he always kept it.

Her motive for allowing the agreement to be destroyed was that she was again free to resume

[1] *Mazarin Memoirs*, 52 et seq.

her suit for separation of goods. But it soon became clear to her that Mazarin was likely to gain the day this time. She was credibly informed that, even if the separation of goods she demanded was granted to her, she would certainly be forced to resume cohabitation with her husband. Characteristically she puts this fact down to the circumstance that this court was composed of older men, who were not to be so easily impressed with the woes of a young and beautiful woman as had been "the younger men of great wit and eloquence" in the lower court.

It was now that, despairing of ever winning her suit and gaining any sort of freedom from her husband in France, she formed the fateful resolution of flying the country. She accomplished her design with the assistance of her brother, Nevers, and of one of her devoted partizans, the Chevalier de Rohan. Even if her relations with Rohan were as innocent as she swore they were—an open question in view of the fact that the tongue of scandal had already not unjustly linked her name with his shortly after her marriage—it was, to say the least of it, indiscreet of her to accept his services on this occasion of all others. The excuse she herself proffered was that she thought that no misinterpretation could be put upon his action when he was known to be passionately enamoured of some other lady. If her account of the flight

is to be believed the Chevalier did not accompany her beyond the gates of the city.[1]

So intense had been her excitement on her departure that when she reached the Porte St Antoine she found that she had left behind the casket of jewels upon which she proposed to depend if all else failed her. She was obliged to send back to fetch it, but luckily there was little risk, for her plans had been so well laid that no one at the palace beyond her accomplices was aware that she had left. Her absence was, in fact, not discovered till some twenty-four hours later, since her maids pretended that she was indisposed and confined to her apartments. This most momentous day in her career was Wednesday, the 13th of June, 1668.

Her husband did not hear of her escape till the middle of the following night. At three o'clock in the morning he rushed round to the Louvre and insisted upon waking up the King and demanding orders to the local Governors to have his wife arrested. The King told him that he intended to keep his promise never to interfere in their affairs again and bade him remark that as the Duchesse had had so long a start it seemed probable that she had already got out of the country, so that orders to stop her would be entirely useless. The Duchesse alleges that the King refused to give

[1] *Mazarin Memoirs*, 67.

Mazarin the orders he asked for, the Duc on the other hand says he granted them. It seems on the face of it the more probable that he simply said that it was already too late to do anything about it. Having been aroused from his sleep in the small hours it is hardly likely that his reception of Mazarin was enthusiastic. Some accounts, indeed, give the impression that he was a little short with the enraged husband. "You should rather ask me for orders to the Governors to prevent her coming back to France than to prevent her leaving," he is reported to have said to the Duc, adding somewhat caustically that he was surprised that the angel who was always giving him instructions about the affairs of other people had so strangely failed to warn him of his own wife's intended flight.

Mazarin was soon convinced that the King was not going to be of any help to him at this juncture, and so went to consult Colbert, who could only advise him to send some kind of an envoy after the Duchesse to attempt to persuade her to come back. The Duc took this advice and immediately dispatched one of the Lieutenants of the Ordnance, named La Louvière.

When Hortense's former suitor, Charles II, was informed of her flight by his sister, the Duchesse d'Orléans, he was hugely diverted. "The sudden retreate of Madam Mazarin is as extraordinaire an

action as I have heard," he wrote to Madame on the $\frac{14}{24}$th of June, 1668. "She has exceeded my L^dy Shrewsbery[1] in point of discresion, by robbing her husband.[2] I see wives do not love devoute husbands which reason this woman had besides many more as I heare to be rid of her husband upon any tearmes, and so I wish her a good iourny."[3]

The journey had at all events been planned with thorough care. Relays of post-horses had been arranged for all along the road, and Hortense was in such a fever to attain some place of safety that she soon abandoned her carriage and took horse for the rest of the way. Her party consisted of her maid, Nanon, a man of her brother's called Narcissus, and a gentleman by name Courbeville, belonging to the Chevalier de Rohan. Both the women were dressed in man's attire, and Hortense could not forbear laughing at the queer figure her short, thick maid cut in this guise.

Once they had reached Lorraine they could consider themselves free from danger. Although the French Resident at Nancy did his utmost to have the Duchesse stopped there, the Duke of Lorraine was not only gallant enough to refuse his request, but also provided the Duchesse, who had

[1] The Countess of Shrewsbury, whose matrimonial adventures were causing much stir in England about this time.

[2] An allusion to a baseless rumour that Hortense had not gone away empty-handed.

[3] Original letter at the Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, Paris.

now reassumed woman's apparel, with an escort of a Lieutenant and twenty guards to conduct her safely into Switzerland.

So exuberant was Hortense's joy at finding herself free at last that she made no attempt to restrain her high spirits, and while indulging in horse-play with her maid in her room in a village inn, she had a fall and injured her knee so seriously that she was obliged to continue her journey in a litter.[1] So at least runs her own story; but subsequent events show that her account must be viewed with some caution. There is some element of doubt as to whether this accident was real or feigned.

The passage through Switzerland was not without vicissitudes. At Neuchâtel Hortense was mistaken for the Duchesse de Longueville and received with royal honours, but to counterbalance this, at another town she and her party received a very different reception, and, says Hortense, "we were all like to be knocked on the head by our ignorance of their language."[2]

When they arrived at Altorf they found to their surprise and chagrin that they would have to remain there in quarantine for some time before they could be allowed to enter the territories of Milan. According to Hortense her leg was now so

[1] *Mazarin Memoirs*, 68.
[2] *Ibid*, 69.

bad that she feared she might even have to have it amputated. In addition to the pain she was also worried by the dissensions among her attendants. Narcissus was jealous of Courbeville whom he considered too familiar and assiduous in his attentions to his mistress. Nanon was jealous of both men for much the same reason. Hortense declares that they disputed to such an extent that Courbeville was really the only one who attended to her at all—an assertion which seems to have been perfectly true, though it really meant something quite different from what Hortense intended her readers to believe.[1]

While the Duchesse was still in quarantine La Louvière arrived with the Duc's messages, but Hortense told him that she would give him no answer until she reached Milan. This occurred sooner than she had expected; for she was fortunate enough to have eighteen days of her quarantine remitted by favour of the Governor, the Duca di Sesto, brother-in-law of her sister's husband, the Constable Colonna.

The Colonnas met her at a country-house of theirs on the way to Milan, where they stayed for a few days before proceeding to the city itself. The readiness shown by her sister and brother-in-law to welcome her might have been expected to produce in Hortense a corresponding graciousness,

[1] *Mazarin Memoirs*, 71.

but it seems to have had exactly the reverse effect. No sooner had she arrived than she hurt Marie's feelings by laughing unrestrainedly at the out-of-date fashions worn by her and the other ladies. Moreover, she avoided their society, asserting that she must have rest and quiet as she had injured her knee severely by a fall from a horse. This new version of the so-called accident was produced for Marie's benefit.

When they went to Milan they were joined by the Duc de Nevers. But Hortense and he had no sooner met than they began to quarrel. The dispute was about Courbeville.[1] Hortense's version of the affair was that her maid Nanon and Narcissus determined to take their revenge on Courbeville by telling the Duc de Nevers that he had spoken insolently of him. Nevers thereupon asked her to dismiss the fellow, which she refused to do. She told him that she could not abandon a man who had been so loyal to her in her misfortunes; moreover, that she did not believe the allegations that were made against him and was certain that they were inspired by malice and jealousy. Failing to obtain his dismissal in this way the two servants had then told Nevers that Courbeville was in love with their mistress.

The truth is that Nevers, whether from his own observations or from information given him by

[1] *Mazarin Memoirs*, 83.

Nanon and Narcissus, had very soon begun to suspect his sister of conducting an intrigue with the man, and very naturally resented it. At first the Colonnas took Hortense's part, especially Marie, who was reluctant to believe that her sister could so degrade herself ; but it presently appeared that the suspicions of Nevers were entirely justified. Hortense took to shutting herself up in her own apartments alone with Courbeville for hours at a stretch, and would at such times deny herself to everyone. The affair became notorious in Milan and was made the subject of countless ribald lampoons. Nevers was so exasperated by Courbeville's familiarity with the Duchesse and insolent behaviour towards himself that he once threatened to throw him out of the window. The Colonnas now joined him in his endeavours to persuade Hortense to dismiss her paramour, and, as she persistently refused, family relations became grievously strained for a time.

During the six weeks that she remained at Milan Hortense received no less than nine couriers from her husband, alternately ordering and beseeching her to return to him. Mazarin had at once begun proceedings against the Duc de Nevers and the Chevalier de Rohan for the part they had played in his wife's escape. He made use of certain letters and poems that had fallen into his hands to attempt to insinuate that the affection of Nevers

for Hortense was rather more than fraternal, but the judges very rightly refused to place so sinister a construction on the amiable inanities of the ducal poet. It was pointed out to Mazarin that if her brother had asserted that Hortense was more beautiful than Venus, he had also declared that she was chaster than Lucrece, and that there was probably an equal modicum of truth in both statements. The case against Nevers collapsed, but Rohan was less fortunate, since the King, recollecting the scandal about him and Hortense, was disinclined to believe that his participation in the present affair was innocent, and so disgraced him and deprived him of all his offices. In addition to this satisfaction Mazarin also secured an order from the Parliament permitting him to have his wife arrested wherever she might be.

Relations between Hortense and her family were no better when the party moved to on Venice and Siena. Hortense still kept her lover with her, and Nevers grew so utterly disgusted that he left them in Siena and returned to Venice. The rest of the party shortly after proceeded to Rome. Here Marie had a violent dispute with Courbeville which occasioned the final break, for Hortense grew so angry that she flounced out of her sister's house and carried her lover off with her to the house of her uncle, Cardinal Mancini.

The threats of the Colonnas thoroughly alarmed Courbeville, who began to fear for his safety and determined to make his escape from the country as speedily as possible He made his way to Civita Vecchia with the intention of taking ship for France. But Colonna was not prepared to allow him to get off so easily. He had had him watched, and when he reached the port he was arrested and confined in a fortress. Here he remained for some months, till Hortense, moved by the recollection of her past favours to him, managed to secure his release through the good offices of Rospigliosi, the Pope's nephew. But she was no longer in love with him ; Rome had provided her with other admirers in abundance, and Monsieur Courbeville went to his own place, wherever that may have been.

After a short stay with Cardinal Mancini Hortense moved on to the house of her aunt, Madame Martinozzi, mother of the Duchess of Modena and the Princesse de Conti. Here she heard that Mazarin was trying to persuade the Pope to cause her to be shut up in a nunnery, so she determined to anticipate him and of her own accord retired to a convent, of which another of her aunts was Abbess. She had by now become so overwrought by her quarrels with her relations that she actually made up her mind to return to her husband without making any conditions.

A message to this effect was sent to Paris; but Mazarin was determined that his erring wife must first be thoroughly punished for her indiscretions, and returned the answer that after she had remained two years in the nunnery he would consider what he should do with her.

This prospect seemed to Hortense uninviting, and she promptly announced her intention of leaving the convent, only to be met with the rejoinder that she would not be permitted to do so. But by this time she had reconciled herself with Marie, who forthwith came to the convent and succeeded by a simple piece of strategy in effecting her escape. She set her children to distract the attention of the Abbess and the nuns in the parlour of the convent, while Hortense and her maid made a dash for liberty. The old Abbess was so furious at being hoodwinked that she incontinently died. Cardinal Mancini too was extremely annoyed at Hortense's escape and complained to the Pope, but was severely snubbed for his pains by His Holiness, who told him that, if he had known that the Duchesse Mazarin had been detained in a convent against her will, he would have gone himself to fetch her out.

Marie wrote to Colbert to explain why she had given Hortense her assistance in her escape.

"I should be very sorry if you should learn from anyone else of what has happened here

concerning Madame de Mazarin, who, feeling unwell in the monastery owing to the bad air there, requested Cardinal Mancini and my aunts to let her leave, which they would not allow. Seeing that the complaisance she had shown in entering the convent had not helped her with Monsieur Mazarin, who continued to pursue her with more rigour than ever, she and I thought that there would be nothing wrong in taking her from a place which she had entered of her own accord. This she did with my concurrence, and we did not tell anyone of our intention, for fear that obstacles would be raised. I took her to our apartment in the Palais Mancini, where one of my aunts used to live, though the Cardinal has made her move from there, which he had no right to do. My sister is still ready and willing to do everything that may be thought fit for settling her affairs. In conclusion, Monsieur, I beg you to endeavour that she shall obtain the pension of which I spoke to you in my last for as long as she is compelled to remain here. My brother left the day before yesterday in the evening and will tell you things that would take me too long to write about."[1]

The original arrangement had been that Hortense was to go and stay with Queen Christina of Sweden as soon as she left the convent ; but she

[1] Perey, *Marie Mancini Colonna*, p. 87.

was informed that by the advice of her Council the Queen now found herself reluctantly obliged to cancel the invitation. The reason can have been no other than that she had heard that Hortense was expecting a child of which her husband was certainly not the father. Hortense therefore took up her residence at the Palazzo Mancini and threw herself wholeheartedly into all the gaieties of the city. Although Mazarin had refused to take her back, he could not bear the thought of her being independent, and enlisted the aid of Madame Martinozzi and Cardinal Mancini to induce the Duchess of Modena to offer her hospitality. The Duchess proved willing enough, but Hortense herself refused. She was enjoying herself far too much in Rome. She went everywhere and refused to make any sort of attempt to conceal her condition. Marie asserts that on the other hand she appeared to be very pleased with herself. Courbeville was probably responsible for her condition, though doubtless many a gallant cavalier could have claimed the honour of the infant's paternity, for during this stay in Italy she conducted a host of intrigues.

Amongst her admirers was a young Norman gentleman, one Jacques de Belboeuf, who was in Rome in the course of his travels to complete his education. Rome was exceedingly dull in the winter, for the Colonnas' was the only house where

any balls or parties were given. Frenchmen naturally flocked there, and it was there that he met Hortense. He found her very gay and said that in spite of her condition she was dancing about as if there was nothing wrong with her.[1] She presented him with a miniature of herself by Ferdinand Hell, of which he was inordinately proud. When he left Rome he did not forget her, as is shown by a letter written to his mother a year later from the Hague, when he sent the precious possession to her to take care of for him till he should come home.

" In the said bag there is also a little silver box, on one side of which is the portrait of Madame de Mazarin, on the other, mine. As the said lady was pleased to give it to me, I wished to place mine on the other side, and shall keep them always. If you wish to see the said portrait and even to show it to others, I beg you to make use of it as you think best, but above all let it be in your presence and do not let anyone finger it. And do not let anyone at all have it in their possesson, for perhaps they might want to copy it, since it is an original and one of the best ever done, and that would cause me much displeasure."[2]

This was not the only portrait which the Duchess gave away during this stay in Rome. A miniature

[1] Perey, *Maria Mancini Colonna*, 90.

[2] *Ibid*, 94.

which she presented to an Italian nobleman was very nearly the cause of a duel between the proud possessor and another less favoured admirer. Only the intervention of the Constable Colonna prevented bloodshed.

Hortense soon spent all her money and was reduced to desperate straits. She was forced to borrow from her friends for her subsistence, and even to pawn her jewels. These she afterwards found it impossible to redeem. Mazarin was appealed to, but refused to do anything in the matter, saying that she should be deprived of all means of subsistence the better to reduce her to her duty. She was obliged in the end to have recourse to a friend of her brother's, the Marquis del Grillon.[1] This was a step which later she was to have cause to regret, since the Marquis, having put her under an obligation to him, thought he had earned the right to make himself tiresomely importunate.

As there seemed no prospect that matters would mend, Hortense determined to return to France with the idea of getting a pension out of her husband. She travelled with the Duc de Nevers, with whom she was now reconciled, and who was returning to France to marry Mademoiselle Diane de Thianges, niece of Madame de Montespan. They took six months over the journey, a

[1] *Mazarin Memoirs*, 94.

circumstance which was probably not unconnected with Hortense's condition. Nothing further was ever heard of the expected infant, and Hortense herself in her memoirs is significantly silent on the subject from beginning to end.

As soon as Armand Mazarin heard that his wife was once again in France, he sent Polastron, the Captain of his guards, with a small army to Nevers with orders to seize her by virtue of the Parliament's order. The people of Nevers, however, were not prepared to brook such high-handed proceedings in their own city and pledged themselves to defend the Duchesse. The King thought it best to interpose his authority and commanded Hortense to proceed to the Abbaye de Lys under the escort of some of his own guards. Three months later he sent Madame Bellinzani to bring her to Paris, where at his suggestion she was lodged at the house of Colbert, who had always been well-disposed towards her.[1]

A few days later Louis XIV himself had an interview with her in the apartments of Madame de Montespan. He was genuinely anxious to find some solution to the problem, and Hortense says that he could not have been kinder to her. He laid two alternatives before her. Either she could return to the Duc, with whom she would not, of course, be expected to resume marital relations, or,

[1] *Lettres de Madame de Sévigné*, II, 49, 6th Feb., 1671.

if she felt it quite impossible to do this, she might return to Italy, and His Majesty himself would see that a pension of 24,000 livres was settled on her. He strongly advised her to accept the first alternative, promising that he would do all in his power to make the agreement as advantageous to her as was possible. Madame Colbert and Madame de Montespan also added their persuasions to the King's, and the Duc de Lauzun remarked to her that she would inevitably spend the whole of her yearly pension at the first inn she came to. But in spite of all this good advice the Duchesse felt it impossible ever to live again in the same house with Mazarin upon any conditions whatsoever, and so accepted the King's offer to have her escorted back to Rome.

As soon as he heard what had been decided Armand Mazarin hastened to the King and protested that Hortense was leaving him without his consent and that it was an unheard of thing that a wife should be taken away from her husband and actually provided with funds for a journey of which he did not approve and which reflected on his honour. Although Louis XIV listened to his plaints with his usual patience, he informed him that he regarded the matter as already settled and was unwilling to open it up again, especially as Hortense seemed quite determined not to resume life with him and would respond to all

representations with the battle-cry of the Fronde: " Point de Mazarin ! Point de Mazarin ! "[1]

And so it came about that a few days later the Duchesse Mazarin once more left the Court of France, and made her way southwards, stopping for a short while on the way at Turin, where she was so cordially received by her erstwhile suitor, the Duke of Savoy, that she made up her mind that if ever again she needed a refuge she would seek it within his territories.[2]

[1] *Lettres de Madame de Sévigné*, II, 84.

[2] *Mazarin Memoirs*, 100.

CHAPTER VI

The Chevalier de Lorraine and his brother—Their affairs with Marie and Hortense—The Marquis del Grillon becomes tiresome—Marie Colonna and her husband—She determines to leave him—Hortense's help enlisted—Their flight from Rome—Adventures by the way—The voyage to Marseilles—Kindness of Madame de Grignan—An emissary from Colonna—The disapproval of the French Court—Hortense and Marie remain in the South—Polastron in search of Hortense—She takes refuge in Savoy—The Governor of Montmeillan's carriage—Hortense joins Marie in Grenoble—Hortense at Chambéry—Marie's difficulties in France—Hortense's ingratitude—Her letter to Louis XIV—D'Orlier's entertaining account of her life at Chambéry—The little Moor—D'Orlier's pathetic appeal to the Duke—"The Memoires of the Dutchess Mazarine"—The Abbé de St Réal—Unreliability of the memoirs—Death of the Duke of Savoy—His widow's attitude towards Hortense—An invitation from England—The journey to Holland—Sidonia's malicious description—Hortense embarks for England.

The Chevalier de Lorraine, the notorious favourite of Louis XIV's brother the Duc d'Orléans, had recently been exiled from France at the request of Madame,[1] and was now staying in Rome together with his brother, the Comte de Marsan. The two young men, who had, of course, known the Mancinis well at the Court of France, attached themselves at once to Marie and

[1] Henriette Anne d'Angleterre, Duchesse d'Orléans, sister of Charles II.

Hortense, and the four of them became inseparable for a time and went about everywhere together. It was the Comte de Marsan who constituted himself Hortense's cavalier, and the favour shown to him by the beautiful Duchesse roused the ire and jealousy of the Marquis del Grillon. Although Hortense had repaid the money this man had lent her to redeem her jewels,[1] he still seemed to be of the opinion that her obligation to him could never be fully repaid until she had granted him her love. Hortense, however, did not find him sufficiently agreeable and had told him so quite frankly when he had followed her to France on her last journey there. Nevertheless, he chose to pick a quarrel with Marsan, and though the matter did not actually end in a duel, the cause of their dispute became known to everyone, so that, as Hortense complains, "without much hurt to one another they had the pleasure once more to make me the subject of people's talk."[2]

At the same time the Chevalier de Lorraine was paying court to Marie. How serious these love-affairs were does not appear to be known, but at any rate there was sufficient in Marie's to rouse the jealousy of the Constable Colonna, who was infuriated by the stories that were told him of his wife's conduct with Lorraine. It was said that

[1] So, at least, she says.

[2] *Mazarin Memoirs*, 103.

she had allowed the Chevalier to paint her portrait in the somewhat diaphanous robe which she used to wear for bathing in the Tiber. Marie strenuously denied this impeachment, and affected to be extremely annoyed at the injustice of her husband's suspicions.

The relations between Marie and the Constable had been growing more and more strained of late. At first it had appeared as if the marriage would turn out very happily, for Colonna had fallen in love with his bride immediately he set eyes on her, and had at first treated her with the utmost kindness and affection. If she had lost his regard it was really to a great extent her own fault. From the beginning he had allowed her a degree of freedom which was granted to no other Italian wife, and had permitted her to continue the way of living to which she had been accustomed at the Court of France.[1] But Marie had never let him —or herself—forget that theirs was simply a marriage of convenience and therefore not to be looked upon in the same light as a union based on mutual attraction. She possessed her full share of the Mancini disposition for gallantry and her attitude towards her marriage gave her in her own eyes full justification for indulging in countless flirtations. These love-affairs, even if they were not really serious, were bound to disturb a husband

[1] *Mazarin Memoirs*, 19.

of the Constable's passionate nature, and one, moreover, who was genuinely in love with his wife, and it was probably his efforts to curb her enthusiasm for this pastime that had incensed her against him in the beginning. That he did resent her behaviour and endeavour to put a stop to it is shown by Hortense's statement that on one occasion he insisted upon leaving Venice, because his wife seemed to be " enjoying herself too much " there during the Carnival.[1]

It seems likely that Marie never completely recovered from the dangerous attack of brain-fever she had had on her first coming into Italy, and that some slight mental weakness had caused her to lose a considerable amount of self-control. The restless and capricious Mancini temperament seems to have become intensified in her, and her mind became as unstable and as susceptible to sudden change as a weather-vane. Her eccentricity was bound to react on her husband, and they gradually became somewhat estranged. The culminating point was reached when, after the birth of her third son, she refused to live with him any more as his wife. She herself gave as her reason the unbearable pains she had experienced in giving birth to this last child, though others say that it was because she suspected the Constable himself of infidelity. However that

[1] *Mazarin Memoirs*, 84.

may be she succeeded in wringing from him a reluctant consent to a "separazione di letto." Curiously enough she seems to have been genuinely astonished that henceforth his attitude towards her changed completely. She complained that he was now harsh and cold in his manner and seemed to take no pleasure in her company. According to her account a letter intercepted by her maid showed that the Constable contemplated a second marriage in the event of her death, and as she was aware that he was perfectly capable of murder and had brought off several successful assassinations, she began to fear for her life. A strange and inexplicable illness she had at this time threw her into a complete panic. She was convinced that she was being poisoned at the instigation of her husband, especially as he seemed completely unmoved by her sufferings. She confided her suspicions to the Chevalier de Lorraine who communicated them to Louis XIV. Louis at once caused her to be informed that she would be welcome if she cared to take refuge in France, and proper protection would be provided for her as soon as she let him know at what port she proposed to land. How much truth there was in Marie's suspicions of her husband will probably never be known, but it is likely that there was a considerable element of imagination in her story. At any rate it is clear that incompatibility of

MARIE MANCINI, PRINCESS COLONNA

Berlin Gallery

[*face p. 122*

character was at the root of their estrangement. There could be no lasting union between a woman of her frivolous temperament and disposition for gallantry and a man of his vindictive temper and ungovernable passions. Marie was a provoking personality, and Colonna was the last man in the world who could be provoked.

Marie now came to Hortense and told her that she had formed a resolution to follow her example and fly from her husband. Hortense avers that she used every possible argument in an attempt to dissuade her sister from her rash intention.[1] There is no reason why this should not be true, since the consequences of her own flight were scarcely of a nature to cause her to advise anyone else to go and do likewise. But it was inevitable in the circumstances that the general opinion was that, far from deprecating her sister's actions, she was really the actual instigator of the flight. This adverse opinion was naturally not lessened by the circumstance that Hortense accompanied Marie on her journey. Yet this was not in any way extraordinary, for with the removal of Marie her only inducement for remaining in Rome was removed also. She consented therefore to go with her into France, though she warned her that, owing to her husband's desire to obtain possession of her person, it would not be possible for her to

[1] *Mazarin Memoirs*, 103.

remain there long. Her intention was to leave Marie in a place of safety and then proceed to Savoy.

One fine day towards the end of May, 1672, when they knew that the Constable would be absent on a visit to one of his studs some twelve miles from Rome, the two adventuresses set off accompanied by the faithful Nanon and Marie's Moorish maid, Morena. To divert suspicion they announced that they were going for the day to Frascati, but in reality they directed their course towards Civita Vecchia, where one of Hortense's servants, by name Pelletier, had arranged for a boat to be in readiness for them. All four of the women were dressed in male attire under their own clothes. They were practically unencumbered with baggage. Marie had left behind her all the jewels she had been given since her marriage, with the request that they should be divided amongst her children. She had taken with her only such jewels as were incontrovertibly her personal property, including the famous pearl necklace given her by Louis XIV.

Both Hortense and Marie have left accounts of this adventure.[1] As to the main incidents they correspond pretty closely, but Marie's is far more detailed. When they reached Civita Vecchia they found that the gates of the town were shut,

[1] *Mazarin Memoirs*, 106. *et seq.*

and so were obliged to retire into the shelter of a wood near by until such time as their boat could be found. But the footman they dispatched in search of it failed to return, and they sent Pelletier forth to see if he would be more sucessful. Then, to the astonishment of their maids, who were nearly beside themselves with excitement and trepidation, both the ladies lay down on the ground and sank into a calm and untroubled sleep. At dawn Pelletier came back with the news that he had found the footman who had gone into an inn and got drunk, but that he had not been able to discover the boat. It was arranged that they should wait in another wood a little further on while Pelletier and a postillion, La Roche, made another search for the elusive vessel. If Pelletier were unsuccessful in his quest this time he was to arrange to hire another boat, since no further time could be lost.

For hours Hortense and her sister waited anxiously in the shelter of the wood. Presently they heard the clatter of approaching hoofs. Hortense was not prepared to take any chances and awaited the oncoming horseman with a loaded pistol in each hand, but fortunately it proved to be no pursuer, but La Roche, who had come back with the welcome news that he had quite by chance discovered the vessel originally chartered. In the blazing heat of the afternoon sun they set off to

walk the distance of five miles that lay between them and comparative safety, Marie weary and fainting, but the intrepid Hortense apparently untired.

A further difficulty awaited them when they reached the harbour. Unable to find the boat, Pelletier had hired another, and now it transpired that the two vessels were lying alongside of each other. At Pelletier's suggestion they decided to take the original boat, since he had some confidence in the honesty of her captain and very little in that of the captain and crew of the other boat. Before they could leave, however, they were involved in an unpleasant altercation with the crew of the second boat, which grew threatening and had to be appeased with money.

The Captain of their own boat also demanded additional payment, as he said that he had not been informed of the risks he was running. Pelletier was furious and wanted to refuse, but Marie thought it more politic to agree to give him another hundred pistoles. In the event the man proved comparatively reliable, for, as Hortense points out, they were completely at his mercy, defenceless as they were, and if they had been robbed and thrown overboard no one would ever have been any the wiser. The temptation would have proved too much for a cut-throat crew. It was inevitable that their quality would at once

be discovered and they would naturally be suspected of having valuables concealed about their persons. As a matter of fact it was concluded that they were fugitives from justice, and Hortense was intensely amused at being asked by the crew whether she had not murdered the Pope.

After a week's uneventful journey aided by favourable winds they reached Monaco, where they furnished themselves with false certificates of health, and then sailed for the port of Ciouta in Provence, whence they made their way overland to Marseilles.

Louis XIV had been as good as his word. Passports were in readiness for them at Marseilles, and there was also a letter of recommendation from the minister Pomponne to the Comte de Grignan, His Majesty's Lieutenant in Provence. An even more welcome gift in their present condition was a parcel of underclothing from Madame de Grignan, Madame de Sévigné's daughter, who wrote that she had heard that they were travelling like true heroines of romance, with plenty of jewels, but no clean linen.

Although the Constable had not discovered their flight till he returned from his stud, where he had stayed three days longer than he had intended, the measures he had taken to discover the whereabouts of the fugitives were so prompt and so thorough, that when they reached Marseilles they

found one of his messengers already installed at the inn where they put up. His presence filled them with alarm and they hastened to apply to the Intendant for a guard which he willingly granted to them. But they need not have troubled to take such a precaution. Colonna's emissary proved to be of a different type from the myrmidons Mazarin was wont to send in pursuit of his wife. With the utmost respect he craved an interview with the two ladies and politely exhorted them to return to Rome. Having received their refusal and a letter from Marie to her husband explaining the reasons for her flight, he withdrew and immediately returned to his master.

In their uncertainty whether subsequent messengers would be as courteous and amenable as the first, Marie and Hortense considered that it would be wiser to transfer themselves to the safety of the Intendant's house during the next night. On the morrow they moved on to Aix.

The arrival of the two beautiful adventuresses in France raised a storm of adverse comment. Most people seem to have been of the opinion that they were engaged in intrigues with the Chevalier de Lorraine and the Comte de Marsan and had come to France with the object of rejoining their lovers. Even their own sisters, Olympe and Marianne, were against them and openly declared that they ought to be imprisoned.

Madame de Scudéry proposed another form of chastisement, suggesting that corporal punishment was the only thing that would ever do either of them any good.

In view perhaps of the attitude taken up by the Court towards their escapade Hortense and Marie decided for the time being to remain in the South of France. From Aix they went to Mirabeau, and thence to Montpellier, whither Marie was drawn by the presence of an old friend, the famous Marquis de Vardes. From Montpellier they went to Monfrein, and it was while they were there that Hortense heard that her husband had been apprised of her presence in France, and by virtue of the Parliament's order had sent Polastron to seize her. She did not receive the information that he was on her track until he was actually in the town, so that there was not a moment to be lost.[1] She went and hid herself among the fish-ponds in the garden, and when Mazarin's emissary appeared, ostensibly with the object of complimenting Marie on behalf of the Duc his master, he was informed by that lady that her sister had already parted company with her some days ago. Fortunately he believed her without question and set off in pursuit of Hortense on a false scent thoughtfully provided for him by Marie's ingenuity.

The appearance of Polastron sufficed to convince

[1] *Mazarin Memoirs*, 110.

Hortense that the time had come for her to leave France, where her husband's arm was long and his power was great. She set off at once by water down the Rhone to Arles, and after wandering about by devious routes for several weeks, eventually reached Turin, where she claimed the protection of her old friend the Duke of Savoy.

Charles Emanuel welcomed her with alacrity and, in order that she might be independent, offered to place the Château of Chambéry at her disposal. Hortense was graciously pleased to accept his generous offer and was about to proceed to this new residence when she received a message from Marie asking her to join her at Grenoble. She determined to set off at once, and the Duke gave orders to his officers that she was to be received everywhere with honour and that everything was to be done to facilitate her journey. Hortense's idea of the privileges so accorded to her seems to have been somewhat wide, as the Governor of Montmeillan found to his cost and thus related to his master.

"The Duchesse Mazarin came through here two days earlier than the Comte de Sales had told me she would. She arrived here on Saturday evening towards nine o'clock, and they were just about to close the gates of the Château when I was informed of her coming. The next day I went down to the town to see her and to ask her to come and dine

at the Château. She replied that she was in a hurry to proceed towards Grenoble to see her sister, to whom she had sent a courier as soon as she arrived in this town.

" She asked me to lend her my light carriage, which I did, and sent my own groom to attend her. She told me that she hoped to lie that evening at Chambéry, where she believed Your Royal Highness had given orders to receive her, and she thought that I ought to have received them too. I cannot conceal from Your Royal Highness that I was much disturbed by this, especially as several persons had written me that she was coming to Montmeillan. I think that the orders to me must have gone astray.

" As soon as I saw that she was resolved not to come up to the Château, I sent her a present of four baskets of game, fruit, etc., wine of Piedmont, and ice. She had it all put into my carriage, and, having quaffed a goblet, she herself got in. She overturned three or four times ; she has smashed my carriage and very nearly killed one of my horses. At times she rode on the courser my groom was riding, at other times she preferred one of the carriage-horses. Her sister came to meet her at an hour's distance from Grenoble in the Duc de Lesdiguières' coach. I do not know if she will stay there long."[1]

[1] Perey, *Marie Mancini Colonna*, p. 143.

The unfortunate Governor could scarcely be blamed if he entertained a secret wish that his volatile visitor might at least not return by way of Montmeillan.

All this time Colonna had been moving heaven and earth to get his wife back, and so powerful were his representations and so firmly were they endorsed by the Vatican that poor Marie's presence in France became exceedingly embarrassing to the French government. The King was absent campaigning in Holland, and the Queen, who had been constituted Regent in his absence, was for obvious reasons by no means favourably disposed towards Marie. She sent her an order forbidding her to leave Grenoble. This Marie refused to obey; she was confident that if she could only succeed in obtaining a personal interview with Louis, she would be allowed to remain in France. The Duc de Nevers joined his sisters at Grenoble and did his utmost to get Marie to return to her husband, representing to her that, however favourably disposed the King might be towards her, he would inevitably be overruled by the Queen and Madame de Montespan. Moreover, the influence of the Vatican was being powerfully exercized on Colonna's behalf. But Marie was not to be persuaded and set off for Paris.

Hortense accompanied Marie as far as Lyons and then returned to Chambéry, where she lived

during the next three years, holding a little Court, to which everyone of consequence would come on their journeys between Italy and France. The Duke, whose former affection for her seems to have experienced a revival, visited her frequently at her château, and would also invite her to all his hunting-parties and to the Court festivities at Turin. As will appear, her life there was by no means devoid of gaiety, and St Evremond's picture of her spending tranquil days in philosophical reflection and study is merely laughable.[1]

In the meantime Marie's quest had been as unsuccessful as she had been warned it would be. Louis refused to see her, refused even to allow her to approach Paris. She was removed from one convent to another and clearly shown that her continued presence in France was undesirable. In the circumstances she decided to follow Hortense's example and appeal to the Duke of Savoy for sanctuary. With his usual generosity he invited her to Turin. Here she again retired to a convent. But Colonna did not cease from employing all means to secure her return to Italy, and her presence in Savoy became as much of an embarrassment as it had been in France. Marie was very unhappy and determined to go and visit Hortense at Chambéry.

[1] St Evremond, *Œuvres*, 1739, V, 234.

Hortense now showed a selfishness and a lack of gratitude that is almost incredible. She actually determined to avoid receiving her sister at a time when she was most in need of affection and consolation. It is not difficult to fathom the Duchesse Mazarin's motives for this callous conduct. The fact of the matter was that as she had recently been making renewed attempts to secure the resumption of her pension, she feared that her espousal of her sister's cause would be considered contumacious and would jeopardize the success of her efforts. This especially as she had written to Louis XIV to endeavour to shed a favourable light over her part in Marie's flight from her husband.

" I do not know, Sire," she had written, " why my pension is no longer paid to me, and why Your Majesty leaves it to Monsieur Mazarin to give it to me if he chooses. I should never forgive myself if I had brought this on myself, but I did nothing save accompany my sister. She informed you of this, Sire, before we left Rome. If you thought this wrong of me, you could have let me know, and I should not have done it. I beseech you, Sire, not to reduce me to the extremity of not knowing where to lay my head. It must be a matter of indifference to you whether Monsieur Mazarin has an extra 24000 livres on his income or not, and by your intervention you will prevent

me from being the unhappiest woman in the world. Be gracious enough to give an answer to him who will present this to you and tell him if you will continue it to me."[1]

What a medley of insincerity, cupidity, and meanness is this letter! It was deliberately intended to give the King a wholly erroneous conception of her present circumstances. Here she was drawing a harrowing picture of herself as a wronged exile, penniless and homeless, while all the time she was living on the fat of the land in a luxurious castle placed at her disposal rent-free by her generous host, who in addition saw that she lacked for nothing and was constantly showering gifts of all kinds upon her.

As soon as she heard of Marie's approach she suddenly recollected that she had once made a vow to go on a pilgrimage to the shrine of St. Francis de Sales, and so, when the unfortunate Marie arrived at Chambéry, she found that Hortense had left some time before. As she had taken care to inform her that she was coming, she was not unnaturally most indignant, but she was forced to return to Turin without seeing her. Hortense was determined to make sure that the coast was clear before she came back, and so did not return to Chambéry till a week after her sister's departure.

[1] Perey, *Marie Mancini Colonna*, 255.

The Duke of Savoy was very curious to know how the Duchess was spending her time at Chambéry, and to satisfy his curiosity he sent orders to the Governor, a certain D'Orlier, to render him a detailed report of her manner of life. This was a task that was scarcely in D'Orlier's line, but he set himself to accomplish it as best he could, and the result was so naive that it would be a pity to give the account in any words but his own.[1]

"To render punctual account to the orders Your Royal Highness sent me by my brother concerning the Duchesse Mazarin, she made up a party with Madame Dunoyer and the Advocate General to visit Madame de Lescheraine at La Serraz, where the Marquis de La Serraz had a chamois killed in the wood below his house in honour of Madame Mazarin."

"On Sunday, the birthday of the Prince of Piedmont, she attired herself to go to the ball given by the Chevalier de Saint Maurice to Mademoiselle Favier—the dark one—in the mall of the Château. Nothing more beautiful than Madame Mazarin could have been seen."

"On Sunday Madame Mazarin made her devotions to St Francis and it happens that every time she makes her devotions she does it

[1] Perey, *Marie Mancini Colonna*, 260 et seq.

with so much zeal and fervour that she is ill and remains indisposed for forty-eight hours."

"On Monday she is going to Madame Dunoyer's at Saint Pierre, where she will stay for several days to hunt and enjoy herself."

"When the Duchesse came back from Saint Pierre I gave her Your Royal Highness's letter; she at once told me that she was very sorry she had not answered two letters Your Royal Highness had written her and thanked you for the wine you sent her. I gave her the complimentary messages as Your Royal Highness commanded me, and she was very pleased, but when I said that Your Royal Highness would like to be with her, she began to laugh and said that the Constabless had the advantage over her in being in the company of so great a prince."

It is obvious that the point of this remark was entirely lost on the worthy D'Orlier, otherwise he would no doubt have refrained from repeating it.

"Last Saturday Madame Mazarin went with Madame Dunoyer and her groom to the Bois de Candie. On the return as she was galloping she came off and for two days she has been a little queer from her fall."

"On Thursday she confessed to Monsieur Lambert and remained for two hours with him in the Chapel of St Joseph. Well, if she continues,

they will soon have to canonise her. On Monday she spent the whole afternoon with Monsieur D'Arvey and Madame Delarue discussing men's infidelity to women."

" Madame Mazarin has had a rocking-bed made in the room next to the Salon ; Madame Dunoyer and Monsieur de Villaroses, the Advocate General, rocked themselves with her all day on Sunday. She has learnt with much grief of the death of the Comte de Soissons ; she has a bath in her room every morning, and three of her favourite nightingales have been eaten by the rats."

" On Monday the 10th of this month we spent the morning shooting with pistols at ducks and geese on a little canal near the house. Madame de Mazarin made some very good shots. With a single shot from a pistol-ball she carried off a duck's head. In the afternoon we went to the corn-fields at Saint Pierre to look for quails. Madame Mazarin shot one on the wing besides several ortolans and other small birds."

" On Tuesday it did nothing but rain. We spent the morning pistol-shooting in a room ; a prize of a crown for the best shot. In the afternoon the weather had improved and we returned to the quail-shooting. As we were near Monsieur de Quintal's house Madame Mazarin asked for something to eat ; the quails and birds she had shot were promptly grilled, and she ate them with

cheese,[1] for that is one of her favourite dishes. On the way back the dogs put up a leveret between Madame Mazarin and Monsieur Delescheraine; they both fired at the same time, and they do not know which of the two killed it. Madame Mazarin took it and cut it open to get the blood to bathe her hands, arms, and face, and she made Madame Delescheraine do the same, saying that there was nothing more cleansing than leveret's blood. They passed through Saint Pierre like that, and the children ran after them as they were all red. As it was only six o'clock when we got home, Madame Mazarin told us to mask ourselves and go to Madame Dunoyer's. When she arrived there she went to bed."

"On Monday we started at dawn to go to the Carthusian monastery of Alluin, with the idea of getting something to eat there. But when the good fathers saw Madame Mazarin, Madame Delescheraine, and their maids in the courtyard they were so terror-struck that they gave vent to cries and exclamations which frightened Madame de Mazarin and made her resolve not to stop there. The Carthusians recovered themselves and sent after us a very fine and very good collation, which arrived just when it was wanted. Madame Mazarin was delighted when I told her that Your

[1] In the original "fromage pecan." The meaning of pecan is obscure. It may mean salted or pickled.

Royal Highness was sending her some dogs. She told me that she would not fail to thank you for them and that she was quite overwhelmed by Your Highness's kindness to her."

"To-day, Saturday, she intends to go to the comedy. She has had a box made for her there.

"Madame Mazarin's zeal and devotion are so great that she always goes to hear the Bishop of Grenoble's sermons. On Sunday Madame Mazarin heard him in the morning at St Leger's, where he denounced comedians and those who go to the comedy. In the afternoon he paid Madame Mazarin a visit lasting four hours, so that on Sunday and Monday she did not go to the comedy. On Tuesday she went to see 'Bajazet,' and on the same day she went to Aix to get treatment for one of her famous dogs which had broken its leg. The next day she communicated and confessed herself for two hours to Monsieur Lambert. Then the Bishop of Grenoble bade farewell to her, and in the evening she returned to the comedy, whither she took bread and cheese to eat."

"Monsieur D'Arvey brought the comedy to the Château to play 'Les Femmes Savantes' in her chamber. After the first act Madame Mazarin was informed that a courier had arrived from Your Royal Highness. Monsieur D'Arvey left the room and brought Madame Mazarin Your Royal

Highness's letter and a key. After the third act Madame Mazarin had an excellent collation brought for her guests, and for herself bread and cheese. At the end of the comedy Monsieur D'Arvey had Your Royal Highness's very beautiful present brought in."

This present consisted of a set of magnificent light firearms which the Duke had had specially made for Hortense. The key which had been handed to her during the performance was the key of the case in which they were enclosed. Hortense was wild with joy at this present. " She could not weary of looking at them," wrote D'Orlier, " Madame Mazarin's face was filled with a joy that no one could fail to remark. In the night Madame Mazarin made her maid get up more than six times to bring her arms to her in bed and see if they could observe something to fire at in the moonlight. She hastens to show these magnificent arms to all who come to see her. She keeps them in her room, and she is annoyed because no one can suggest where to go to try these fine guns."

A little time after the Duke, always solicitous for his guest's comfort and hearing that the wine of the country did not meet with her approval, sent her a case of Asti Spumante. This present seems to have appealed to her almost as much as the last.

" Last Sunday Madame Mazarin masked herself with all her household and went to Madame Delescheraine's, where they spent the evening playing blindman's buff. On Wednesday she amused herself by roasting chestnuts and dropping them in a glass of the excellent wine Your Royal Highness sent her. That day they found it so good that Madame Mazarin and Madame Delescheraine drank a half dozen small decanters each. On Thursday evening Madame Mazarin masked herself with all her household, even her chaplain, and they went to play Hoca at Monsieur Delescheraine's. After that they played blindman's buff, for that is her favourite game. In the evening Monsieur de Saint Séverin took the bank at Hoca. Madame Mazarin lost five or six pistoles. When she is playing this game she masks herself, saying that she does so in order that no one may see the faces she makes when she wins or loses."

" On Thursday Madame Mazarin and Madame Delescheraine amused themselves making various perfumes in perfuming-pans. On Wednesday Madame interviewed the Marquis de Saint Maurice's cook for two hours talking of nothing but soup, ragouts, and entremets. On Saturday I presented to her the Moor Bellavance brought from Your Royal Highness to Madame Mazarin.[1] She is

[1] The little boy's name was Mustapha. St. E., V, 57.

delighted with him and found him so clean and well got up that she spent a long time just looking at him and reading over and over the verses on his collar, saying that nothing could have been better done. I took the liberty of showing her the letter Your Royal Highness did me the honour to write to me. She read it twice and laughed while she read it. On the same day she went after dinner to a fête that took place at Les Feuillants. She went on foot with Madame Delescheraine and had the Moor to walk before her."

" On Thursday she adorned the Moor with caps of Venice point. Madame Mazarin's greatest pleasure now is to make caps for the Moor and to get him to talk. She has been twice to Monsieur de Séverin's to see the Moor shoot. Monsieur de Séverin made him shoot beneath Madame Mazarin's portrait."

The little Moor, who had been taken off a corsair-vessel, was a new and attractive toy to Hortense. She kept him constantly at her side, and took him everywhere she went. He accompanied her on her frequent visits to Aix. The Comte de Cagnol wrote from there: " She has already bathed twice in the lake, where she indulged in divers little pleasantries. Amongst other things she had herself dragged about in the water by her Moor, sometimes on her back, sometimes on her front. This Moor swims like a fish."

Whenever Hortense was at Chambéry D'Orlier continued his intimate record of her actions. "The wedding of the Baron de Châteauneuf and Mademoiselle Bergère has taken place here. Madame Mazarin danced at it, and her skirt which was all of Venice point without any slip, showed her leg up to the knee, and as it is a very fine one, it gave a great deal of pleasure to those who beheld it."

Unfortunately, but not unnaturally, the Duke found it quite impossible to keep this ingenuous record to himself. He could not resist showing certain of the more entertaining passages to various courtiers. The matter was talked about, and soon rumours began to come to Hortense's ears. The consequence was that the Duke received the following pathetic communication from D'Orlier.

"I have a request to make to Your Royal Highness which is that, as I could not write it by the last post, I must beg you very humbly by this to pardon me if I no longer send you the daily account of Madame Mazarin. As she has been for some time in the country I thought on her return that I ought to go and pay my respects to her, to offer her my continued services and assure her of my obedience. When I sent to her by a page to know if it would be convenient to her to receive me, she sent the same page back to say that she did not wish to see me. Well, Senator Gand

and Monsieur and Madame Delescheraine were with her at the time! I believe Your Royal Highness will graciously pardon me if I do not expose myself every day to these insults, since this is the third time that she has treated me thus, and unless Your Royal Highness lays positive commands on me to go there, I shall not go any more. As she does not wish me to see her or be with her, I cannot know what she does or what she says accurately enough to write to Your Royal Highness."

In the face of these obviously reasonable representations the Duke was reluctantly obliged to excuse D'Orlier from any further literary efforts.

It was during Hortense's residence in Savoy that her famous "Memoirs" were composed. Her sole object in compiling them was, she said, to defend herself from calumny and to attempt to justify her past conduct in the eyes of the world. The book was actually written by one of her lovers, an adventurer whose real name was César Vicard, but who apparently without any warrant chose to style himself the Abbé de St Réal. Although he had spent the greater part of his life in France, he was really a native of Chambéry, whither he had returned quite recently with the object of writing a panegyrical life of the Duke of Savoy. This work never saw the light; perchance

it was put aside in favour of the authorized version of Hortense's extremely varied career.

The Duchesse Mazarin's own part in the compilation of the work cannot but have been fairly considerable. The book is immeasurably superior in wit and vivacity to anything else that St Réal ever wrote. Many thought that the memoirs had actually been dictated by Hortense, but it is unlikely that this was so. St. Evremond asserts that the Duchesse lacked the gift of expressing herself on paper and invariably wrote badly; but he says at the same time that she always thought well and clearly, and the most satisfactory explanation is that while the Duchesse supplied the entire content, little more than the actual wording is due to St Réal. At any rate the book was written in the close collaboration made possible by the very intimate relations subsisting between Hortense and her bogus Abbé.[1]

These memoirs indubitably form one of the most unreliable productions of this nature that has ever been devised. The truth is frequently disguised or even suppressed, the facts are ruthlessly altered to make them fit in with any impression the Duchesse is anxious to create. Hortense's faculty for judicious selection in the arrangement of her

[1] The Editor of the *Œuvres de St Réal*, 1757, denies that the memoirs were written by him, and declares that it was his liaison with the Duchess that gave rise to the impression. In Des Maizeaux' *Life of St Evremond* it is, however, stated categorically that St Réal was the writer.

material was unrivalled, and she seems to have been congenitally incapable of telling the truth without either reservations or embellishments. For sheer effrontery one of the choicest jewels in the book is Hortense's statement that she is aware that " the chief glory of a woman ought to consist in not making herself to be publicly talked of."[1] After this no further surprise can be caused by her ingenuous declaration that everyone who knew her well was well aware that she never took much pleasure in ostentation and publicity. She would have the world believe that the perpetual limelight in which she lived was focussed on her by fatality and not by any actions of her own.

Hortense's present mode of life might have continued indefinitely had not the Duke of Savoy suddenly died in June, 1675. His widow, who now became Regent, had viewed her husband's interest in the Duchesse Mazarin with alarm and disapproval, and now proceeded to take her revenge by making the country so unpleasant for her that she was fain to seek another retreat. It is said that she even went so far as to order her to leave the country and ensured obedience to her command by informing the Duc Mazarin that he was at liberty, if he wished, to arrest his wife within the territory of Savoy.

[1] *Mazarin Memoirs* 2.

As luck would have it, at this very moment there came like a bolt from the blue an invitation to England. The prospects spread before her were dazzling, and Hortense needed no second bidding. Like the intrepid adventuress that she was, she once more donned the costume of a cavalier, and set forth gaily on her perilous journey. Little cared she that she had to pass through countries where war was raging, and she journeyed through Switzerland, Alsace, and Germany, threading her way through armies careless and unscathed. Sidonia de Courcelles gives a glimpse of her voyage in a letter written from Geneva to her lover Du Boulay. It is needless to add that she was not reconciled with Hortense. "On arriving here I learnt that Madame de Mazarin had spent several days here before retiring to Germany. . . . This was because Madame de Savoie directly after her husband's death commanded her to leave her dominions. Some say that it was from some scruple on the part of Madame de Savoie, who does not wish to give her protection to a woman who has quarrelled with her husband and is suspected of ill conduct, others that it was because during the Duke's life she was jealous of the Mazarin, who when she was in favour had often behaved very insolently towards her. This seems the more likely reason, but it is most unfortunate to find

oneself driven out of every place. But what is so strange is that this woman triumphs over all her misfortunes by an excess of folly which has no parallel, and that after receiving this set-back she thinks of nothing but enjoying herself. When she passed through here she was on horse-back, befeathered and bewigged, with a train of twenty men. She talked of nothing but violins and hunting-parties and everything else that can give pleasure."[1]

Sidonia's caricature, malicious as it was meant to be, fails lamentably as a caricature ; her subject had run away with her. Gallant Hortense! Whatever may have been her shortcomings, she at least possessed that proud, brave spirit which men must perforce admire.

And so, "befeathered and bewigged," the Duchesse Mazarin eventually reached Amsterdam, where she remained for a few days before embarking from Brill to begin a new chapter in her amazing career over in England.

[1] *Mémoires et Correspondance de la Marquise de Courcelles*, 1855, pp. 106-107. Letter dated Geneva, Nov. 8, 1676.

CHAPTER VII

A stormy voyage—Hortense lands in England—She disappears in London—Her beauty—Ralph Montagu's plans—"A coffee-house conversation"—The true explanation of her coming—She lodges with the Duke and Duchess of York—Ruvigny's account of her—Her reception at Court—Her friendship with Buckingham—The philosopher St Evremond—Nell Gwyn goes into mourning—Charles appeals to Louis for Hortense—Louis refuses to help her—Jealousy of the Duchess of Portsmouth—A secret understanding between Charles and Hortense—Renewed efforts to have her pension increased—Mazarin is obstinate—Alarm of Ruvigny—Courtin sent to help him—Character of Courtin—A passage in his "Instructions."

The voyage to England was very stormy and the boat carrying the Duchesse was driven far out of its course. She was forced to land at Sole Bay,[1] whence she made her way to London still in male costume with her train of seven servants, five men, two women, one of them possibly the faithful Nanon, and, of course, the little Moor the Duke of Savoy had given her.

Her arrival was characteristic of her. She was met some ten miles out of London by Ralph Montagu with whom she rode into town. Once there she refused to tell anyone where she was

[1] *C.A.*, 117, f. 114. Ruvigny to Pomponne, Jan. 2, 1676. Other accounts say that she landed at Tor Bay.

THE DUCHESS OF YORK

Wissing. Hampton Court Palace

[*face p. 150*

going and promptly disappeared. The Duke of York and the Count de Gramont sent all over London in search of her.[1] Her coming had caused a great stir, for it was whispered that there were political workings at the back of it. There seems little reason to doubt that this was so. St. Evremond, the exiled French philosopher, admits that he himself played some part in persuading her to accept the invitation, which seems to have been extended to her by the subtle and intriguing Ralph Montagu, who had known her in Chambéry and since that time had kept up a voluminous correspondence with her.[2] An unremitting foe of the Duchess of Portsmouth, it was his intention that Hortense should supplant that lady in the affections of the King. The present occasion seemed to him admirable, for the Duchess of Portsmouth was now in a weak state of health, and it had been remarked that the King's passion for her had seemed of late to be on the wane. Hortense on the other hand had never been more beautiful. She looked much younger than her twenty-nine years, which is a rare enough circumstance in women of her pronounced Southern type. A splendid, rather flamboyant creature she seems to have been. She was, says a panegyrist, " one of those lofty Roman Beauties, no way like our

[1] *C.A.*, 117, f. 114. Ruvigny to Pomponne, Jan. 2, 1676.
[2] Des Maizeaux, *Life of St E.*, lxxxii.

Baby-visaged, and Puppet-like Faces of France."[1] Her hair was jet-black and curled naturally in the most engaging manner, her complexion though somewhat dark was magnificent, her mouth exquisitely shaped. But her eyes were the chief weapon in her armoury of charms. "The colour of her eyes has no name," declares the same enthusiastic observer, "it is neither blue, nor gray, nor altogether black; but a mixture of all three, which participates of all the excellence that is found in them. They have the sweetness of the blue, the briskness of the gray, and above all, the fire of the black."

If her attractions contained nothing subtle, that was all to the good in the eyes of Montagu, who did not wish her to wield any political influence over the King, but only to destroy that of the Duchess of Portsmouth. Montagu did not even trouble to throw a veil of secrecy over his machinations. The reasons for the Duchesse Mazarin's coming were freely bandied about in Court and City. The various theories and conjectures are admirably epitomized in a curious burlesque Coffee-House conversation composed by some anonymous wit.[2]

[1] *The Picture and Character of the Duchess of Mazarin.* A letter probably written by Saint Réal and appended to the Duchess's Memoirs.

[2] *Cal Stat Pap Dom, Charles II,* 1675, No. 138. The arbitrary spelling and punctuation of the original have been left untouched.

A COFFEE-HOUSE CONVERSATION

Some dayes before the poor Coffeehouses fell under persecution, two french Gentlemen had the Curiositie to see what passed at a chief one of them, wherof they had heard much talk; And accordingly they went to Garraway near the Exchange, where some Company at a little by-Table perceiving them to be strangers, and they themselves having been travellers, Invited them to their societie. Being sate down with them, the Conversation began as followeth.

first coffist: Mounsers, wee should have been glad of yr Company at any time, But more especially at this, when wee were talking of your Countrey. Pray tell us, if you know, what news the late notable Expresse hath brought?

first Monsr.: Mee know not of any.

2nd Monsr.: Nor I ma foy.

1 *coffist:* Why have you not heard of the Courrier arrived three dayes since with a Retinue that markt him to be of great quality?

2 *coffist:* I saw him and his Attendants alight from their post horses, terribly weather-beaten, having rid in the late great storms.

1 *Monsr.:* Mee now understand, was it no at Commun Gardin,[1] In Bedford Street.

1 *coffist:* That was the place.

1 *Monsr.:* Mee can now satisfie you your demand, but I can no well-speak English, though understand. You understand french though no speake, Therfore with yr Conge I will parle franois.

[1] Covent Garden.

2 *coffist:* It will bee best so, for wee all understand french.

1 *Monsr.:* Je vous diray doncques, que celuy que vous avez veu, estoit un courrier extraordinaire tout a fait et de grand qualité. . . . Car a la verité ce n'estoit point un courrier, Mais une Courreuse bien Illustre.

2 *coffist:* Wee still understand you lesse and lesse.

1 *Monsr.:* Pour vous expliquer la chose nettement Messieurs, Ie vous diray, que le courrier que vous avez veu mettre pied a terre, botté et esperonné, Couvert d'une brandenburgue, et encore plus de Crotte, estoit la belle Duchesse Mazarin, en propre personne.

1 *coffist:* Pray do not think to abuse us, mounsers.

2 *Monsr.:* Il ne se mocque point Ie vous Iure, car ce fust effectivement cette nouvelle Reyne des Amazones qui est venu ainsi de del les Monts, Tirer Race Martiale de vostre Alexandre.

4 *coffist:* Shee could not have taken a better way of recommending herself, both for vigour and soundnesse then by riding astride, booted and spurr'd, five hundred mile, upon a post-horse, In the depth of winter.

1 *Monsr.:* Cette pensee seroit assez plaisante, mesme sur une bouteille de Sillery, de la meilleure pointe; Mais sur ces tasses de sombre Coffée, qu'á ce qu'on nous a dit, n'inspirent que des reflexions graves et politiques, Ie me serois attendu a quelque chose de plus serieux.

2 *coffist:* You appear, Gentlemen, so civil and so sociable, that wee shall not constrayne our selves in your company, for indeed the arrival and reception of this dutchesse Mazarin at Court, does affoord notable matter for politick reflexions, even out of a Coffee-house.

3 *coffist:* Though I have been silent hitherto, I am lesse a stranger to this matter, then the rest of you appear to bee; I have heard it variously discoursed of already. Some say that the Nation, already too sensible of the Amorous excesses of their Prince, may bee more enflamed, by such an accession of great expence that way, as this appears likely to prove. Besides, her great beauty, quality, and adroictnesse, of wch there is so great a Character in print, seem to furnish occasion for apprehending a greater power in her over the king, if once hee come to love her, then any other of his Mistresses have had.

4 *coffist:* They are fools in my opinion who fear that. For since our good king, with all his good parts, hath a weak side towards women, as great Henry the 4th your Glorious king and his grandfather, I think it much more honourable for great Brittain to have its Monarch subdued by a famous Roman dame, then by an obscure damsel of litle Brittain,[1] Or by a frisking Comedian.[2] And for point of expence, No woman was ever likely to bee so cheape a mistresse to the king as shee, who

[1] Louise de Keroualle, who came of a noble Breton family.

[2] Nell Gwyn.

having fair pretensions to great summs of money due to her, If hee bee able to pay her grace well, it is likely shee will have contentment, And who will blame his Ma^tie to take his pennyworth if hee can, out of so fine a creature, and a dutchesse already to his hand, No small convenience.

1 *Monsr.:* N'est ce pas lá bien raisonné ?

2 *Monsr.:* Categoriquement.

3 *coffist:* But there are reflexions upon this subject of a farr higher nature. A great Wit, and profound statesman, as well as lofty Poet, who is wont to swear fearfully upon such great occasions, protests—By the living god—that the french king finding Carwel[1] too weake, both as to Extraction and Interest, to wed throughly the concerns of France, Hath sent the king over a new Mistresse that shall do it to the purpose.

1 *coffist:* This is a speculation Indeed too poetical.

3 *coffist:* I shall then tell you another more reasonable one, and not so farr fetcht; It is said for certain, That the Ingenious gentleman Mr Ralph Montague (so lucky in remote contrivances) having made a great acquaintance with this Dutchesse, while she resided at Chambry in Savoy, Hath by concert with Arlington, prevailed with her to come over hither. They hoping that the king taking to love her, shee may bee a means of ruining my Lord Treasurer,[2] who is thought to bee much strengthened by the Dutchesse of Portsmouth.

[1] The anglicized version of the name Kerouallе.

[2] The Earl of Danby.

1 *Monsr.* : Par ma foy ces messieurs ne sont pas trop bien esclairez qui se persuadent d'une niepce et Heritiere du Cardinal Mazarin ayant pretensions d'argent a la Cour, Qu'elle puisse estre Engagée a se faire partye, contre le Ministre qui tient la faveur et la bourse.

3 *coffist* : Some more favourable to this affaire say, That the Duke of Yorke undertakes her Reconciliation with her husband, she being so near of kin to his Duchesse (A Pious work) And that this good occasion hath brought her hither. Others are knavish enough to say, That her great beauty hath given his highnesse a grudging to her grace, in another way.

2 *coffist* : This is a Iest, for his own Duchesse is full as handsome and younger.

1 *coffist* : True, but all things are possible in this world, And though Devotion hath given his Highnesse a new turn, The bowles, you know, will still to their Byasse.

2 *Monsr.* : Ie prens ma part a vos plaisanteries, mais Ie n'entre point dans vos politiques, Et me contenteray de vous dire, que la Duchesse Mazarin est en verité si charmante, Que si vostre Roy la baise seulement une fois, Ie tiens la de Portsmouth pour foutüe.

This paper, which was probably one of those productions so frequently circulated in manuscript at Court about this time, is remarkable not only for its fair literary merit, but also for the very intimate knowledge of the inner workings of the various political parties displayed by the author, who must have been someone connected with the

Court. It goes without saying that the explanation advanced by the "third coffist," and described by him as the most reasonable and the least far fetched, is the one intended to linger in the reader's mind as the true one. It was perfectly true that at this time Arlington and Montagu were endeavouring to undermine the influence of the Treasurer, Danby; it is also true that Danby had recently formed a close alliance with the Duchess of Portsmouth, whom he had conciliated by leaving her perquisites intact when he was cutting down expenses all round in an endeavour to economize. The French Ambassador, Ruvigny, had some inkling of the truth. He knew at least that Montagu was pulling the strings, but believed that he was acting entirely on his own account, though he considered that he might have taken Arlington into his confidence, owing to their common hatred for the reigning favourite.[1]

Even in France Hortense's real motive for going to England was suspected by clear-sighted people like Madame de Sévigné, who wrote to her daughter on Christmas Day, 1675, that the Duchesse Mazarin was thought to be in England, "where, as you know, there is neither faith, nor law, nor priest; but I believe that she would not desire, as the song has it, that they should have expelled the King."[2]

[1] *C.A.*, 117, f. 114. Ruvigny to Pomponne, Jan. 2, 1676

[2] *Lettres de Madame de Sévigné*, IV, 299.

Nobody was deceived by Hortense's own assertion that her sole motive in coming to England was to visit her kinswoman, the Duchess of York, who was the daughter of one of her Martinozzi cousins. Nevertheless, it was in the lodgings of the Duke and Duchess of York that she first took up her abode, until a little later the Duke placed at her disposition for as long as she should elect to remain in England a house in St James's Park newly built by Lord Windsor and recently purchased by himself.[1]

The King hastened to welcome the new arrival and at once sent the Earl of Sunderland to present his compliments to her. Gramont came in person to offer to be her guide at the English Court. He found her as beautiful as ever she had been. Ruvigny was a shade less enthusiastic. "For myself, who have not seen her since the first days of her marriage, and who have retained the recollection of what she was like then, I have observed some alteration, which, however, does not prevent her from being more beautiful than anyone in England. I no longer find in her that air of youth, nor that delicacy of features, which perchance she may regain when she has recovered from the fatigues of so difficult a journey."[2]

Her beauty, however, was still brilliant enough

[1] *Belvoir MSS*, II, 28. Lady Chaworth to Lord Roos.
[2] *C.A.*, 117, f. 117. Ruvigny to Pomponne, Jan. 6, 1676.

to cause a considerable stir at the English Court. Everyone was talking about her, " the men with admiration, the women with jealousy and uneasiness."[1] But the women apparently soon got over their alarm, and Hortense speedily became as popular with them as with the more susceptible sex. Her great beauty and her romantic and adventurous past did not fail to appeal to the imagination of the courtiers, and she was eagerly sought after for every party and gladly received everywhere. The men tumbled over one another in their eagerness to show her the sights of London, Gramont and Buckingham were foremost among them. It seemed only natural that she should make friends with the Duke of Buckingham, who possessed a spirit very much akin to her own, and had led just as eventful a career. With him she explored the delights of Bartholomew Fair,[2] and she could have found no better guide ; for the Duke was the Court's most distinguished expert in mummery, and on occasion had himself posed as a mountebank with unqualified success.

Her greatest friend in England was the philosopher Charles Marguetel de St. Denis, Seigneur de St. Evremond, who had already been living in England for some years, having been exiled from France for indiscreet criticisms of

[1] *C.A.*, 117, f. 140, Ruvigny to Pomponne, Jan. 20, 1676.
[2] *Hist MSS. Comm Report*, V, p. 117.

Cardinal Mazarin at the time of the Treaty of the Pyrenees. He appears to have known Hortense when she was a child, and now welcomed her with open arms. He cut a brilliant but strange figure at the English Court. His appearance was most remarkable. He was very tall, and instead of the periwig customary at this period he wore a cap over his own white hair. His oddity was further enhanced by an enormous wen which had grown up between his eyes and overshadowed his whole face. And yet his looks did not repel, for he was able to counteract them by his exquisite courtliness and the brilliance of his conversation.

As soon as the real purpose of Hortense's visit was known all eyes were fixed on her and the King. The Duchess of Portsmouth was so cordially hated that the goodwill of all the Court was with the new claimant. Even Nell Gwyn displayed no jealousy, her inveterate dislike for the Duchess of Portsmouth made her rather pleased than otherwise that a new rival had appeared on the scene. She is supposed to have gone into mourning on the fall of the Duchess of Portsmouth—a childish pleasantry practiced by her more than once and very characteristic of her mocking disposition. At first the King showed no sign of being exceptionally attracted by Hortense. He used to meet her every day in the bed-chamber of the Duchess of York, who was now approaching her

confinement, but he did not seem as yet to have any design on her, though, as Ruvigny said, there were some very wide-awake people who were doing their utmost to provide him with one.[1]

It was not long, however, before Charles began to interest himself in the Duchesse Mazarin's affairs. She explained to him the difficulties of her financial position with such success that both he and the Duke of York wrote letters to Louis XIV requesting him to have her pension increased. They also desired Ruvigny to let the King of France know that their requests were seriously meant. Ruvigny complied, and all the more willingly in that so far he could honestly give Hortense a good character. "Her conduct so far has been very modest and meets with general approval. She is always with the Duchess of York, who is very fond of her, and up to the present there has been nothing to satisfy the curiosity of observers."[2]

Louis XIV could not see his way to intervene in the matter of the Duchesse's pension, which appeared to him an exclusively domestic matter in which any interference on his part would be entirely unjustifiable. He accordingly wrote to that effect to Hortense herself as well as to

[1] *C.A.*, 117, f. 140. Ruvigny to Pomponne, Jan. 20, 1676.
[2] *C.A.*, 117, f. 149. Ruvigny to Louis XIV, Jan. 30, 1676.

Charles II and the Duke of York. Ruvigny feared that the consequences of this refusal might not be altogether desirable. "I gave the other letter to the Duchesse," he informed Pomponne, "and when she had read it in my presence she showed great displeasure at finding herself abandoned in a Court where money is so necessary to her. She will get it from the King of England, if it is true, as they tell me, that this prince is about to give the order to the Keeper of his Privy Purse to carry her a thousand pounds. It is likely that this present, which will be made in secret, will have grievous consequences for the Duchess of Portsmouth. Her jealousy gives her so little rest that she is greatly changed since the Duchesse Mazarin, who is the subject of it, arrived in England. There is talk of giving her a lodging in Whitehall when the Duke of York resumes his in St James's where she is at present. If this should happen, as it is likely that it will, no one doubts that my lord Arlington and his cabal will succeed in their enterprise. Should this intrigue, which so far has been kept pretty secret, make any progress, I will take care to let you know."[1]

Hortense was by no means disposed to submit tamely to the first refusal. Moreover, she soon showed that she had other strings to her bow.

[1] *C.A.*, 117, f. 184. Ruvigny to Pomponne, Feb. 27, 1676.

Already on the 12th of March Ruvigny had informed Louis that there was a secret understanding between the King of England and Madame de Mazarin.[1] The whole thing had been so cleverly and secretly managed that those who had hoped to bring the thing about themselves had been anticipated and had got nothing out of it. Louis was warned that he might soon expect a renewal of representations from Charles and the Duke of York in the matter of the Duchesse's pension. It would, Ruvigny thought, be politic to listen to them this time and to put pressure on Mazarin. Otherwise the Duchesse would undoubtedly take offence, and might even work against French interests in England. And that was likely to be a grave matter if she became Charles II's mistress; for then she could draw upon other resources, and would no longer be in any way dependent on France. Ruvigny regarded the first £1,000 as a pointing straw.

Sure enough renewed requests were made that the pension should be increased and that Mazarin should be compelled to restore his wife's jewels to her. Ruvigny told the King that Charles and his brother had been distinctly piqued by the first refusal, and that it would be wiser now to defer to their requests. He had discussed the question of the jewelry with them and had arrived at a

[1] *C.A.*, 118, f. 9. Ruvigny to Louis XIV, March 12, 1676.

compromise. They would be content if the pension were augmented and enough jewelry restored for the Duchesse's ordinary requirements. " It seems to me," he concluded, " that the King of England takes the interests of this lady more to heart than he did in the beginning, and that later on he may well become passionately attached to her. From her behaviour one would imagine that she is not aware of it, but the most enlightened people have no doubt that there is an understanding between them."[1]

After this emphatic statement from Ruvigny Louis XIV was obliged to take the matter more seriously. The French Ambassador was informed that the King of France was much impressed by the interest shown in the Duchesse Mazarin's affairs by the King of England and the Duke of York, and that this would make him all the more ready to speak to the lady's husband. But unfortunately Mazarin's point of view had to be taken into account also, and this was that he did not see why he should supply his wife with funds to remain in England when what he desired most in the world was her return to France.[2] A week or so later Ruvigny was told that, although the King had endeavoured to move the Duc Mazarin in the matter, he had failed to persuade him, and

[1] *C.A.*, 118, f. 14. R. to Louis XIV, March 16, 1676.
[2] *C.A.*, 121,f. 46. Pomponne to Ruvigny, March 25, 1676.

so did not feel that he could in justice oblige him to a course from which he was so manifestly averse.[1]

Ruvigny was obviously nonplussed by the turn this affair had taken. He saw that a liaison between Charles II and Hortense might have important political consequences, but he felt totally unqualified to deal with so delicate a situation. He was convinced that there was some sort of an understanding between the Duchesse and the King, though nothing was as yet publicly known. To the general surprise the Duchesse did not even go to the Arlingtons' house at Euston when the Court went to Newmarket in April. In Ruvigny's opinion this was merely a blind. Had she followed the King, there would have had to be an open declaration of their relations, and he thought they were trying to put that off as long as possible.[2]

It must have been with considerable relief that the bewildered Ruvigny received the news that another envoy, Honoré de Courtin, was to be sent over to co-operate with and ultimately replace him. Here was a man who was far more suited by nature to deal with petticoat diplomacy. A courtier and a wit, with charming manners and a great knowledge of the world, he was admirably

[1] *C.A.*, 121, f. 50. Pomponne to Ruvigny, April 8, 1676.
[2] *C.A.*, 118. f. 53. Ruvigny to Pomponne, April 16, 1676.

CHARLES II

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successful in ingratiating himself with the female sex. He was a diplomatist of no mean order and was much liked and trusted by Louis XIV. It is perhaps necessary to state this fact, for the frivolous tone of his despatches might incline the casual observer to underrate the value of his services to his country. He applied himself with acute seriousness to his work ; but he thought himself justified in couching his reports in as amusing terms as he could devise, especially as he had to make them to one or the other of two of his oldest and best friends, Louvois and Pomponne. The former was, like himself, a man of gallantry, and the letters to him are very frank and unfettered ; but Pomponne was apt to be serious-minded and deprecatory of wit in an ambassador, so that Courtin was a little more guarded in his revelations to him, though on occasion he would chaff him unmercifully on his virtue and solemnity.

The passage relating to the Duchesse Mazarin in the " Instructions " given to Courtin shows quite clearly what were Louis XIV's views about the lady. The envoy was commanded to treat the Duchess of Portsmouth with the utmost respect. " But perhaps he will find her less powerful if the information received from London turns out to be true. The arrival of the Duchesse Mazarin has caused a great stir in that Court. The King of England appears to have been

attracted by her beauty, and though the affair has been conducted so far with some secrecy, it is likely that this growing passion will take the first place in the heart of that prince. His Majesty will have all the more interest that Monsieur Courtin should observe what are the intentions of this Duchesse towards him, since he has reason to suspect that they are not as they ought to be considering how much cause she has to be grateful to him. One of the first things she has asked of His Majesty since she has been in England, and upon which she has persuaded the King of Great Britain and the Duke of York to write to him twice with some urgency, is that His Majesty would compel the Duc Mazarin to increase to twenty thousand crowns the pension of eight thousand crowns which His Majesty desired should be given her, and to restore to her the jewels she left in Paris. Since this request did not seem to the King to be justified, and since His Majesty believed the pension of twenty-four thousand livres to be sufficient until such time as she is willing to return to her husband, he excused himself to the King of England and the Duke of York from putting pressure on the Duc Mazarin. It is possible that, annoyed at not having succeeded in this claim, she may make use against His Majesty of the credit which her beauty gives her with the King of England. But besides that

her greatest interests are in France, and that she has a very real interest in procuring herself the honour of the King's favour, Monsieur Courtin may assure her of His Majesty's good will towards her, and may let her hope, though in general terms, that later on she may expect to benefit by his protection and kindness."[1]

C.A., 120 A., f. 17, April 15, 1676.

CHAPTER VIII

Hortense at Mass—Mazarin's ridiculous proposals—Courtin remonstrates with him—Hortense lays down her conditions—Courtin does his best—His letters to Louis XIV and Pomponne—Colbert interviews Mazarin—Jealousy of St Réal—The King's water-parties—Courtin on the subject of mixed bathing—Charles II takes to vanishing at night—Return of the Duchess of Portsmouth—Affected alarm of Nell Gwyn —"The Triple Combat"—Louise shows her jealousy —Montagu reported to be in love with Hortense —Jane Middleton—Louis' instructions regarding Hortense—Doubt as to her attitude towards France—Courtin deprecates half-measures—He is suspected of being in love with Hortense—His disclaimer.

Courtin arrived in England in May and at once applied himself to endeavouring to discover what Hortense's real position at the Court of England was, and to studying her character so as to find out the most tactful methods of handling her. His first sight of her was at High Mass in the Portuguese Ambassador's chapel, where, so he informed Pomponne, he had thought she looked profoundly bored at the length of the service.[1]

Armand Mazarin had entrusted Courtin with certain proposals which he was to lay before the Duchesse. This he did, though with no hope of success; for he himself avowedly considered the Duc's suggestions ridiculous and unreasonable.

[1] *C.A.*, 118, f. 116. Courtin to Pomponne, May 25, 1676.

By way of inducing her to return to France he proposed that she should retire for a considerable period to the Abbaye de Montmartre, there to lead a monotonous and retired life without seeing her friends or going out at all except under escort, with other similar conditions which no one who was sane could have conceived and no one who was not mad would have accepted. Courtin's sympathy was entirely with the Duchesse, as appears from the lengthy letter which he wrote to the Duc to inform him of the outcome of this negotiation.

He had really done his best to persuade Hortense to return to her husband and had urged upon her all the considerations he could think of. But she flatly refused to go into any convent and replied that she would return to her husband only on her own conditions. These were: firstly, that she should have her own separate household in two little houses which abutted on to the Palais Mazarin and were situated between the Duc's own apartments and those of her brother, Nevers; secondly, that she should not be obliged to receive her husband in her apartments or live with him as his wife; thirdly, that he should abandon all legal proceedings against her. She demanded also her jewels, furniture for her house, and an allowance of 60,000 francs for herself and her household. In return she would undertake to behave herself

properly and would also promise not to go to Court.

These conditions Courtin took care to inform the Duc were definite and final, though he thought that there might be some chance of her being willing to accept a slightly smaller allowance. But it would be quite useless to attempt to persuade her to accept any other conditions, and it would be worse than useless to talk any more of sending her to a convent. Some inducement of an attractive nature must be offered to her, if he really wanted her back; otherwise she would undoubtedly elect to remain in England, where she was exceedingly comfortable. A furnished house had been put at her disposal by the Duke of York, and she was always surrounded by friends, being popular even with her own sex. With a lamentable disregard for veracity Courtin assured the Duc that his wife's conduct up to now had been above suspicion, and that she was taking no advantage of her beauty and her gift for dress to shine at the English Court. Above all he warned the Duc that it was no manner of good hoping that necessity would eventually drive his wife back into his arms; for, although she was at present short of money and obliged to be economical, there was always money to be obtained if she cared to ask for it. It was plain, therefore, that if the Duc were really sincere in his

desire to get her back, he must initiate overtures of a rather more friendly nature.[1]

All Courtin received in return for this very sensible advice was eight pages of unctuous balderdash in which, so he told Pomponne, " he thinks to persuade his wife to return to him unconditionally by arguments which would be most appropriate for a petition to St Nicholas du Chardonnet, but which could have no effect on a woman who is breathing the air of London."[2]

It was not only out of sheer friendliness that Courtin was at so much pains to endeavour to bring about a reconciliation between the Mazarins. He had gone into the matter really thoroughly and had convinced himself, as had Ruvigny before him, that it would be most impolitic to allow the Duchesse to become incensed against France. For this reason he advised the King to put pressure on her husband to offer her more reasonable terms. She was already inclined to think that Louis was prejudiced against her, and if nothing were done to conciliate her, she would probably act against the French interest when she became the acknowledged mistress. And this was no unlikely contingency. The Duchess of Portsmouth was hated at Court and every effort was being made to throw Charles into the arms of the new siren.

[1] *C.A.*, 118, f. 158. Courtin to Mazarin, June 8, 1676.
[2] *C.A.*, 120, f. 191, Courtin to Pomponne, June 22, 1676.

The matter had become so notorious that Charles even went so far as to discuss with Courtin and Ruvigny the plots that were on foot to engineer a liaison between him and Madame de Mazarin. "He firmly assured us that he would not allow himself to be won over, but she is beautiful, he prefers talking to her rather than to anyone else whenever he happens to meet her. Everyone around him speaks of nothing but her attractions, and it will be very difficult for him to resist the temptation for long. And then it will be a very dangerous matter to fight against the Minister and the Mistress at the same time. That is why, as I have already taken the liberty to say, the best would be that she should cross the sea again. It matters very little to Your Majesty whether she sleeps with Monsieur de Mazarin, or whether he does or does not give her 50,000 francs for her expenses, but it would matter very much to you if in the present circumstances England should join your enemies or should force you, so as to avoid this, to agree to conditions of peace which would be neither advantageous nor pleasing to you. And so Your Majesty would be acting very much in your own interests, if you put pressure on Monsieur de Mazarin, with whom it is impossible to settle anything so long as he trusts his own judgment or consults his pious friends."[1]

[1] *C.A.*, 120A, f. 64. Courtin to Louis XIV, June 8, 1676.

It would be useless to relate at length the arguments with which Courtin repeatedly endeavoured to convince Louis that something must be done about Hortense. The main point was that she obviously had not enough money to support herself in London, and that, if it were not forthcoming from France, she would procure it in England, and would doubtless find some manner of showing her resentment at Louis' refusal to help her. "There is no time to be lost," concluded Courtin, "either to get her to return to France, or to make sure of her here." All the Court, even some of the women, were straining every nerve to bring about the liaison and so defeat the Duchess of Portsmouth and the French party, and if something were not done soon they would succeed.

Courtin was still more emphatic in the representations he made to Pomponne.[1] He told him that Hortense ought to be got out of the country as soon as possible. "It is necessary either to remove from here at whatever cost a lady as much to be feared as she is owing to her beauty and her resentment, or to make sure of her by giving her some help. Supposing the King did make her a present of ten or twelve thousand crowns, he could easily get it back by deducting it from the pensions due to her husband." But in his opinion by far

[1] *C.A.*, 120A, f. 68. Courtin to Pomponne, June 8, 1676.

the best course would be to use any means to persuade her to return to France.

Louis XIV seems to have been impressed by Courtin's arguments, but he felt that all he could in justice do in the matter would be to inform Mazarin that it was his desire that the Duchesse should return to France, even if he should be obliged to make some concessions to secure her consent. He accordingly sent Colbert to the Duc with instructions to use all endeavours to persuade him to be more amenable.[1]

But although Colbert for three whole hours used all the arguments suggested by Courtin, in addition to any he could think of himself, he could not persuade the Duc to recede one inch from his position. He refused even to allow Colbert to consult with the pious persons upon whose advice he himself was acting in this matter. He declared again and again that he was prepared to do anything and make any concession if his wife were prepared to return to him as a wife, but that he would never consent to her living a separate life under his very roof. Colbert confessed that he had been confident that he would be able to talk the Duc over and had been extremely surprised at his firmness.[2]

Meanwhile Courtin was endeavouring to bring about the reconciliation from this side of the

[1] *C.A.*, 120A, f. 87. Pomponne to Courtin, June 16, 1676.
[2] *C.A.*, 120A, f. 116. Colbert to Pomponne, June 28, 1676.

water. He left no stone unturned to attain his object and even tried to turn the jealousy of St Réal to advantage. The pseudo-abbé had either accompanied the Duchesse to London or had followed her there. He haunted her apartments continually and followed her about with his eyes. César Vicard was an adventurer and a vicious debauchee of the worst type, but he had one redeeming point, which was that he worshipped Hortense with a single-hearted and enduring passion. At the moment he was unremittingly opposed to Hortense's return to France. "He appears to me to be very much in love," wrote Courtin, "and I am not the only person who has noticed it. Also, as soon as a reconciliation is mentioned, he gets so excited, that it is easy to see how great an interest he has in preventing it."[1] In spite of his present attitude Courtin was of the opinion that it might possibly be through him that Hortense's return to France could be secured. His great knowledge of human nature had taught him that jealousy will drive a man from one extreme to the other more swiftly than any other emotion. He accordingly advised Pomponne that everything should be done to conciliate him, and suggested that he might do worse than offer him some benefice or pension.[2]

[1] *C.A.*, 120A, f. 101. Courtin to Pomponne, June 22, 1676.
[2] *Ibid.*

The French Ambassador was now convinced that Hortense had become Charles II's mistress, or at least that it was merely a question of days before she would become so. The King was assiduous in his attentions to her and gave frequent parties in her honour. This summer of 1676 was very fine and many of the entertainments were held on the water.[1] Hortense was always with the King, except when he went up the river every evening to bathe. Mixed bathing was unknown at the Court of Charles II. "The ladies do not go with the men," Courtin told Louis XIV, "it is the only decency which they observe in this country. There is a great deal of laxness in the rest of their conduct."[2]

About this time the King took to vanishing at night. Courtin learned that often he did not return to his apartments till three o'clock in the morning. No one could discover where he had been, but the French ambassador was prepared to hazard a shrewd guess![3]

At the beginning of July the Duchess of Portsmouth returned from Bath, whither she had retired for some weeks to recover from her recent illness. She was now feeling stronger and was not prepared to be defeated by Hortense without a struggle.

[1] *C.A.*, 118, f. 205. Courtin to Pomponne, June 25, 1676.
[2] *C.A.*, 119, f. 1. Courtin to Louis XIV, July 2, 1676.
[3] *C.A.*, 118, f. 205. Courtin to Pomponne, June 25, 1676.

Nell Gwyn affected to be greatly alarmed at her return, and declared that she would have to arm herself to the teeth to protect herself against the resentment which would be bound to fall on her owing to the frequent visits Charles had paid her during the absence of the official mistress.[1]

There was no love lost between Nell and the Duchess of Portsmouth, but it was never a question of a fight to the death between them, for there was room in Charles's capacious heart for both of them. There was no political element in the loves of Charles and Nell Gwyn. But with Hortense it was different. She possessed the political backing of Arlington and Montagu, and her triumph might mean Portsmouth's fall.

The Court was deeply interested in the approaching struggle between the two fair Duchesses. Waller even went so far as to celebrate the contest in song.

THE TRIPLE COMBAT

When thro' the world fair MAZARINE had run
Bright as her fellow-traveller, the sun;
Hither at length the ROMAN eagle flies,
As the last triumph of her conqu'ring eyes.
As heir to JULIUS, she may pretend
A second time to make this Island bend.
But PORTSMOUTH, springing from the antient race
Of BRITONS, which the SAXON here did chase;
As they great CAESAR did oppose, makes head,
And does against this new invader lead.

[1] *C.A.*, 119, f. 1, Courtin to Louis XIV, July 2, 1676.

That goodly Nymph, the taller of the two.
Careless, and fearless, to the field does go.
Becoming blushes on the other wait,
And her young look excuses want of height.
Beauty gives courage; for, she knows, the day
Must not be won the AMAZONIAN way.
Legions of CUPIDS to the battel come,
For LITTLE BRITAIN these, and those for ROME.
Dress'd to advantage, this illustrious pair
Arriv'd, for combat in the list appear.
What may the Fates design! for never yet
From distant regions two such Beauties met.
VENUS had been an equal friend to both,
And VICT'RY to declare her self seems loth:
Over the camp with doubtful wings she flies;
Till CHLORIS shining in the field she spies.
The lovely CHLORIS well attended came,
A thousand GRACES waited on the dame:
Her matchless form made all the ENGLISH glad,
And foreign Beauties less assurance had.
Yet, like the three on IDA'S top, they all
Pretend alike, contesting for the ball.
Which to determine, LOVE himself declin'd,
Lest the neglected should become less kind.
Such killing looks! so thick the arrows fly!
That 'tis unsafe to be a stander-by.
Poets, approaching to describe the sight,
Are by their wounds instructed how to write.
They with less hazard might look on, and draw
The ruder combats in ALSATIA:
And, with that foil of violence, and rage,
Set-off the splendour of our golden age:
Where LOVE gives law, Beauty the sceptre sways;
And, uncompell'd, the happy world obeys.

The Duchess of Portsmouth scarcely adopted the wisest methods of counteracting Hortense's increasing hold on the King's affections. She did not trouble to disguise her jealousy and

LOUISE DE KEROUALLE, DUCHESS OF PORTSMOUTH

Goodwood

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apprehension. At the dinner she gave to bid farewell to Ruvigny on his return to France she made a complete fool of herself. After the banquet a concert was given by La Forest, Gandomeche, and Gilet, some of the King of France's musicians who were then on a visit to England. As soon as Charles came into the room Louise pointedly asked for a Spanish song, "Mate me con non mirar mas no mate me con celos."[1] The application was not lost on the bystanders, who did not conceal their amusement, nor did the King himself appear to resent their laughter. He was being perhaps over-assiduous in his attentions to Louise just now, but it was suspected that this was merely to give him better opportunities of deceiving her.[2]

Courtin himself was by no means unaffected by Hortense's charms, nor did he fail to take any opportunity of studying them. On this subject he wrote characteristically to Pomponne. "As you desire to know how I am in England, I may tell you that up to now the air has not done me any harm. Were I younger and less wise than I have become through your example I should find plenty to occupy my time very agreeably. Madame Mazarin is coming to dine with me to-day with the Countess of Sussex, eldest daughter of the

[1] Kill me by not looking at me, but do not kill me with jealousy.

[2] *C.A.*, 120A, f. 143. Courtin to Louis XIV, July 9, 1676.

Duchess of Cleveland. Near me dwells Madame de Middleton, who is the most beautiful woman in England. Poor St Evremond has fallen passionately in love with her in his dotage. In the afternoons I take La Forest, Gandomeche, and Gilet to her house, and then I meet her again with them towards eleven o'clock in the evening in St James's Park, where I also meet the poor Portuguese Ambassador,[1] who is dying for love of Madam Mazarin. Mr de Montagu who had a mind to conduct an intrigue for the King with her has himself fallen into her toils, and malicious tongues here say that he is being unfaithful to the beautiful Madame de Middleton, with whom he is said to have been in love for a long time."[2]

The fair Jane Middleton was one of the foremost beauties of her time. A daughter of Sir Robert Needham, she had married one Mr Charles Middleton, a gentleman of no more importance in the eyes of posterity than he appears to have been in the eyes of his wife. Gramont had found her coy, but other admirers were more favoured, including the Duke of York, Ralph Montagu, and the poet Waller. She soon became and always remained one of Hortense's closest friends, so that it is unlikely that there was any serious rivalry between them over Ralph Montagu. It is probable

[1] Don Luis de Vasconcellos, Conde de Castelmelhor.
[2] *C.A.*, 119, f. 15. Courtin to Pomponne, July 2, 1676.

that his interest in Hortense was largely political, and at any rate he did not want her for himself so much as for Charles II. His instrument in this intrigue was his sister, Lady Harvey, to whom he had introduced Hortense immediately on her arrival in England, and at whose house it was found possible to arrange for her to meet the King frequently.[1]

As a result of Courtin's representations Louis XIV had been giving serious consideration to the question of Hortense's position at the Court of England. Further attempts by Colbert to soften the heart of Armand Mazarin had proved abortive, and Louis was beginning to wonder whether it might not be politic to take steps to "change the discontentment she was showing into good will towards France." Courtin was instructed to examine the possibilities of using her to further French interests in England. He was, however, to go very warily about it. He was to try to estimate what damage she could do to France if she were hostile, as well as what services she could render if it was thought worth while to make her friendly. But at present he was to make no promises to her.[2]

Courtin considered these half-measures most dangerous. On July 16th he wrote a most

[1] *Belvoir MSS*, II, 28. Lady Chaworth to Lord Roos.
[2] *C.A.*, 120A, f. 127. Pomponne to Courtin, July 2, 1676.

pressing letter to Pomponne urging upon him the necessity of procuring some sort of an allowance for Hortense, from the King, if it could not be got out of her husband, but at any cost from some French source. Otherwise there was every possibility that she might become vindictive and aid the party hostile to France. She was already deeply offended because she had heard that Louis XIV had joked about her in public. "We have the whole kingdom and the chief minister against us here," he concluded, "if we are to have the mistress too, I leave you to judge of the future,"[1]

The more urgently Courtin wrote on behalf of Hortense the less notice was taken of his appeals. Pomponne contented himself by saying that the ambassador might inform the Duchesse Mazarin that the King of France was doing his best to persuade her husband to increase her allowance. "That is the only means we can give you to keep her in sentiments favourable to His Majesty."[2]

In subsequent letters Pomponne became blander and blander in his assurances that he was certain that Courtin's charm of manner would suffice by itself to keep the Duchesse in a frame of mind favourable to France.[3] The fact of the matter was that the French Ambassador's solicitude on

[1] *C.A.*, 120A, f. 164. Courtin to Pomponne, July 16, 1676.
[2] *Ibid*, f. 192. Pomponne to Courtin, July 28, 1676.
[3] *Ibid*, ff, 238, 290

the lady's behalf had appeared both to Pomponne and to Louis himself to be rather more eager than the circumstances really justified, and they had both concluded that he had fallen a victim to her charms, in spite of his protests that he would not allow himself to be seduced by her beauty, as others in his place might have been. "This is the only time in my life," he had written gaily to Pomponne, "when I believe myself to have been quite as sensible as you yourself could have been."[1]

[1] *C.A.*, 119, f. 22. Courtin to Pomponne, July 9th, 1676.

CHAPTER IX

Friendship between Hortense and Lady Sussex—Growing familiarity of Hortense with Charles II—The Duchess of Portsmouth's black eye—Disappointment of Hortense—Courtin warns Louis XIV—The Duchess of Portsmouth's despair—Courtin gives her good advice—The pertness of Nell Gwyn—An amusing exchange between Louvois and Courtin—Courtin's party—The gravity of French statesmen—Increased intelligence of Hortense—The influence of St Evremond—Courtin declares he is not in love with Hortense—The Prince de Monaco—St Réal leaves England—The reasons for his going—The dispute between Lord and Lady Sussex—Hortense and Lady Sussex at the Lord Mayor's Show—Interference of the Duchess of Cleveland—Charles supports Lady Sussex—A fencing display in St James's Park—The King obliged to give in—Triumph of Lord Sussex.

The Duchesse Mazarin had contracted the closest of friendships with the little Countess of Sussex, a daughter of Charles II by the Duchess of Cleveland. At this time she was expecting her first child and so was very much confined to her apartments. Hortense was nearly always with her, and her presence gave rise to many a rumour, as Lady Sussex's rooms were those formerly occupied by her mother in the time of her favour. They were situated directly above the King's apartments, and Charles could get from one to the other by a private staircase without anyone being

any the wiser. People could, however, and did say what they thought might be going on, especially when Hortense took to spending the night occasionally with her friend.[1]

Courtin, of course, made it his business to investigate all such rumours and to watch the progress of the affair, which, he was convinced, was already going on between Hortense and the King. "I am told by Madam Harvey, sister of Monsieur de Montagu, the most intriguing and the cleverest woman in England, that Madame Mazarin is extremely satisfied with the conversation she has had with the King of England, and that she is counting strongly on the protection and good offices of Monsieur de Montagu."[2]

When Lady Sussex's baby arrived Hortense's visits became more and more frequent. The King always found her there when he came to visit his daughter. "The King of England goes nearly every day to visit Madame de Sussex, whom Madame de Mazarin is nursing. I happened to be there the day before yesterday when he came. As soon as he came in Madame Mazarin went and whispered to him with a great air of familiarity, and she kept it up all the time the conversation was general and never called him 'Your Majesty' once.

[1] *C.A.*, 120A, f. 168. Courtin to Pomponne, July the 20th, 1676.

[2] *C.A.*, 120A, f. 168. Courtin to Pomponne, July the 20th, 1676.

At the end of a quarter of an hour His Britannic Majesty seated himself on the end of the bed, and as I was alone I thought it proper to retire. But I remained convinced that it is not without foundation that the most enlightened courtiers believe that the King their master desires to profit by his opportunities. Nevertheless he goes to Madame de Portsmouth's every day. I often meet him there and I observe that a good many other people come with him and remain in the room with him."[1] They were all obviously of opinion that it was only from good manners that the King still continued to visit the Duchess of Portsmouth, and that it was no longer necessary for them to effect a tactful withdrawal when he was with her.

As time went on Madame Mazarin's influence visibly increased and the Duchess of Portsmouth's declined. The King was diverted rather than otherwise when the courtiers made witticisms at the expense of the erstwhile favourite. When she gave herself a black eye Bab May remarked with impunity to the King that she would probably like to black the other one too to make herself look more like Madame Mazarin.[2]

Hortense in her conversations with Courtin did not disguise from him that she was sensibly disappointed at the King of France's refusal to do

[1] *C.A.*, 119, f. 79. Courtin to Louis XIV, Aug. 3, 1676.
[2] *Ibid*, f. 83. Courtin to Pomponne, Aug. 3, 1676.

anything for her, and that she was seriously contemplating the possibility of throwing in her lot with the party most hostile to France. "Whatever I may say to her, she has got it into her head that the King has not shown himself well-disposed towards her, and so I cannot promise you that she will not be capable of giving way to her annoyance if an opportunity arises, or even that she will not actually give herself the pleasure of showing that she is not without power here. You know better than I do that the whole English nation is filled with animosity against France, that the Lord Treasurer, the one amongst the ministers who has most influence over the King, appears at any rate to affect the same sentiments to the point even of not coming to call on me as he should have done. Nothing remains for us but to set against us the person who has most influence over the King's heart."

Courtin again repeated the arguments he had so often used in favour of securing Hortense's speedy return to France on conditions acceptable to her, and wound up with a final warning. "I have warned you early enough of the evil which might occur; I have proposed to you the means by which it might be prevented; I have laid special stress on that which I believe the surest though the least agreeable to me, because I have regarded nothing save the service of the King. After this, if

Madame Mazarin should prejudice His Majesty's affairs, I hope you will remember my attitude on the subject."[1]

Courtin was hardly exaggerating the danger of offending Hortense, now that she was definitely to become Charles II's mistress. The Duchess of Portsmouth herself was convinced that her day was over. When Courtin visited her at the beginning of August he found her in floods of tears. "Yesterday evening," he wrote to Pomponne, "I saw something which aroused all my pity and which would perhaps have touched you, wise and serious as you are. I went to see Madame de Portsmouth. She opened her heart to me in the presence of two of her maids, of whom perchance you know one, named Ballex, who formerly was in the service of the Comtesse de Plessis. Madame de Portsmouth explained to me what grief the frequent visits of the King of England to Madame de Sussex cause her every day. The two girls remained propped against the wall with downcast eyes; their mistress let loose a torrent of tears. Sobs and sighs interrupted her speech. Indeed, I have never beheld a sadder or more touching sight. I remained with her till midnight, and omitted nothing to ease her mind and show her what interest she had in concealing her grief."[2]

[1] *C.A.*, 119, f. 83. Courtin to Pomponne, Aug. 3, 1676.
[2] *C.A.*, 119, f. 88. Courtin to Pomponne, Aug. 6, 1676.

Courtin's counsels to her during this affecting interview amounted to advice to feather her own nest while it was still in her power and to secure an assured future for her child, the Duke of Richmond.

Louis XIV could not help being diverted at his ambassador's admirable description of the woeful plight of the " signora adolorada," though he was considerably alarmed at the prospect of the fall of the Duchess of Portsmouth.[1] Such an event would react most unfavourably on his relations with Charles, since she was the chain by which he had bound that volatile monarch to him, and her downfall would inevitably mean the coming into power of the party opposed to France. At any rate the outside world must not be allowed to believe that there was any decay in French influence over the King of England. The French representatives at the Congress of Nimuegen were instructed to maintain that the Duchess of Portsmouth was in the best of health and that her relations with Charles II had suffered no change. At all costs the Dutch must not be deterred from concluding a separate peace with France.

Courtin found it impossible to give his master so favourable a report. He told the King of France that Charles now scarcely saw the Duchess of Portsmouth except in public, and in fact made

[1] *C.A.*, 120A, f. 260. Louvois to Courtin, Aug. 19, 1676.

more frequent visits of the kind that were euphemistically known as private to Nell Gwyn than to her. That sprightly young person did not fail herself to draw the French Ambassador's attention to this circumstance, mischievously suggesting to him that if the King of France felt disposed to continue his policy of making valuable presents to the King of England's mistress they could in future be made more suitably to her.[1]

Courtin, however, knew full well that this charming devil-may-care creature was never dangerous politically. Free conversation on subjects very far removed from affairs of state was ever the keynote of the supper-parties which "the frisking comedian" used to give to Charles and his rakish friends.[2] Political danger was far more to be apprehended from the increasing ascendancy of the Duchesse Mazarin. He was determined that at whatever cost the two Duchesses must not be allowed to form opposite camps ; since, if this were to happen, the enemies of France would at once espouse Hortense's cause, and with such a rallying-point they could scarcely fail to carry the day. He realized that he must attempt the extraordinarily difficult task of persuading the two ladies to make friends with each other. He himself was on intimate terms with both.

[1] *C.A.*, 122, f. 52. Courtin to Pomponne, Jan. 18, 1677.
[2] *C.A.*, 120C. Courtin to Louvois, Dec. 17, 1676.

The Duchess of Portsmouth made him her chief confidant and poured all her troubles into his sympathetic ear ; but he was aware that he did not possess the full confidence of her rival, though he did his utmost to inspire her with trust in him, and courted her friendship by giving lavish entertainments for her. In connection with one of these a very entertaining correspondence passed between him and his friend Louvois. It happened that at the time certain funds were lying idle, apparently not earmarked for any particular purpose. Courtin suggested that he could easily find plenty of uses for them. " This sum would be very convenient to me if you would let me use it to pay for the chapel I have just built. We would pray to God for you there. It would also help me to defray the expenses of a little party I am giving this evening to Madame Mazarin, Madame de Sussex, Madame Hamilton's sister, and Mademoiselle Trevor, who is the prettiest of the Duchess of York's maids-of-honour and is not displeasing to the Duke. In the party there will be a Secretary of State,[1] a colleague of mine at Cologne, and he will dance country dances for six hours on end without stopping. The young ladies' admirers will be there too, and the girls will praise me for my good nature and are sure to declare that I know how to live. The door will be firmly closed. I

[1] Sir Joseph Williamson.

shall play at ombre with Madame Mazarin, and we shall let the young people dance as much as they like. Monsieur de Pomponne shall never know anything about this. He would say that I shall never become serious. But one must either be a man of pleasure in England, or not come here at all. I can, however, assure you that I shall never degrade myself like all the other foreign ambassadors, who all keep mistresses—beginning with Monsieur Vanbeuninghen,[1] who is as much in love as you were at the time when you so often went to Chelles. I am just going to visit Madame Middleton, who is the most beautiful woman in England—and the most amiable. I would give her all your money if she would only listen to my suit, but she once refused a purse of fifteen hundred pounds offered her by Monsieur de Gramont, so you need not fear for your treasure."[2]

Being by nature of a lively and pleasure-loving temperament, Courtin was always amused and at times not a little irritated by the gravity and seriousness which the French even then expected from those in any official position. He was totally unable to see any good reason why French statesmen should not dance. The English, he thought, held a more reasonable view about such things. He once went so far as to expound his

[1] The Dutch envoy.

[2] *C.A.*, 120C. Courtin to Louvois, Sept. 24, 1676.

point of view to Pomponne, who had always maintained a rigidly uncompromising attitude in the matter and strongly deprecated Courtin's frivolous propensities. The occasion was the marriage of one of the Lord Treasurer Danby's daughters to a son of Lord O'Brien. "For the past twelve days the Treasurer has been continually at festivities, and he and Monsieur de Williamson dance country-dances till five in the morning. If you and Monsieur Colbert were seen to do such things you would both have plenty of critics. Here and everywhere else I have been it is not considered undignified. Each country has its customs, but in France, where the affectation of gravity has no sort of relation with the natural temperament of our race, you have to assume an air of old age before your time. I know well, Monsieur, that this is to your taste; you were born sensible and serious. As for me, who have refrained from dancing in England, so that you can have nothing to reproach me with, after I have seen pleasures pushed to a greater length among so many different peoples than with ourselves, I cannot blame those who seek some relaxation for their mind in innocent diversions, which can contribute to the healthiness of the body, and which at any rate make sure that it does not bend or break beneath the weight of old age."[1]

[1] *C.A.*, 124, f. 64. Courtin to Pomponne, Jul. 15, 1677.

Louvois was inclined to be more indulgent in this matter than the solemn Pomponne ; though he himself in a letter to Courtin confessed that he was not prepared to emulate the agility of English statesmen. " The treasure is destined for a purpose less pious than the building of your chapel. You may, however, make use of it until Monsieur Dumetz pays you your appointments. The description of the party you were going to give made me long to be there. I should not have joined the Secretary of State who was prepared to dance for six hours on end, and I don't know the first card in ombre, so that all I could have done would have been to fasten my eyes on Madam Mazarin. Here they are attributing to her qualities in which we find it difficult to believe. You may imagine that I do not mean that it is of her beauty they speak, for without doubt she is the loveliest woman in the world. But they say that her wit and humour are as attractive as her person. If you were less preoccupied with her, I would ask you to let me know if there is any truth in this, but in the state in which the same news tells us that you are, it is impossible for me to believe anything you might tell me on the subject. I remember seeing Monsieur Vanbeuninghen at St Germain wearing rouge and patches which the Chatou and Passy girls had put on him. I don't know whether the mistress he keeps in England

often sends him to Whitehall similarly adorned. I have heard the Comte de Gramont speak so much of Madame Middleton's beauty that I would very much like to have a portrait of her."[1]

The reports that had reached France concerning Hortense's new-found reputation for wit and intelligence show that she must have made great mental strides since the days when she first appeared at the Court of France and had been considered beautiful but stupid by Madame de la Fayette, who was by no means inclined to make a harsh judgment on anyone. The change was doubtless due in some degree to St Réal, who, if he was a knave, was at least a man of some culture and intelligence, and had encouraged her to take an interest in literature and philosophy. Moreover, since her coming to England the friendship of St Evremond, who had already been in the country for fourteen years and knew everyone worth knowing, had brought a crowd of intelligent people to her apartments, where hours were spent in profound discussions on Art, Literature, and Philosophy. She would even discuss religion with the Protestant refugee, Justel, and with the learned Canon, Isaac Vossius, whom she would playfuly rally on his scepticism. When some knotty point was at issue she would turn to him and say " You, Mr Vossius, who have read all

[1] *C.A.*, 120C, f. 156. Louvois to Courtin, Oct. 1, 1676.

good books—except the Bible—can easily explain this to us."

The insinuations of Louvois regarding the state of his feelings towards Hortense could not, Courtin thought, be allowed to pass over in silence, and he hastened to disculpate himself. He was not in love with Hortense himself, but he was prepared to tell Louvois in strict confidence who was. The Prince de Monaco, who had recently come to England on a few days' visit, had become greatly attracted by her and had already stayed longer than he had at first intended. For himself he swore that his head had not been turned by the lady's beauty. It was perfectly true that he saw a good deal of her, visited her in fact every day, but that was merely because he found both the Duchesse herself and the company she kept extremely agreeable. She also seemed to like him and took special pains to be charming to him. "But, as I have already informed Monsieur de Pomponne, I am perfectly aware that she conceals things from me and that she is displeased at the very little consideration that has been shown in France to the requests the King of England made in her favour, and I am very much deceived if she is not engaged in some intrigue here."

This opinion was shared by the Duchess of Portsmouth who was perfectly certain that there

was already a regular liaison between Hortense and the King. Courtin was inclined to think that she was right, though her extreme jealousy might have inclined her to look at the matter a little too seriously. At all events the situation was still fraught with danger. "No notice has been taken of my advice," he complains, "it is absurd to quibble about increasing an allowance by eight thousand crowns at the request of a monarch who is as fond of ladies as is the King of Great Britain." The consequences of this persistent refusal might well be grave for France, for the lady was definitely irritated, and no one knew better than the French Ambassador that opportunities to injure France were not hard to seek for anyone who felt inclined that way.

He begged Louvois not to perturb himself any further about his relations with the Duchesse. They were good friends, that was all. He was regarded by her merely as a welcome guest who, while the rest of the company were playing cards, would seat himself in an armchair by the fire and read some book out of the excellent library St Réal had collected for her. He resented it strongly that a frivolous view should be taken of his sentiments for Hortense; but his next sentence was scarcely calculated to inspire Louvois with a conviction of his insusceptibility. "If you had seen her dancing the furlana to the guitar yesterday

evening you could not have prevented yourself from being heart and soul in her interests."[1]

In October St Réal, who had been very much left out in the cold during the summer and was possibly further upset by the favour shown by Hortense to her new admirer, the Prince de Monaco, suddenly made up his mind to leave England. None of those who frequented Hortense's apartments knew of his intention, and if Hortense herself was aware of it she said nothing and made no attempt to deter him. " I believe,' wrote Courtin, " that vexation at seeing Madame Mazarin always surrounded by people who prevented him from conversing with her as easily as he did at Chambéry, caused him to take a violent resolution, of which I am sure that he repented many times before reaching Dover. Madame Mazarin sustained his departure with the fortitude of a Roman matron, and to tell you the truth I am greatly deceived if she is not very pleased at being delivered from him."

Certainly of late he had not been a very inspiriting companion for her. During the last month he had been plunged in a deep melancholy, remaining seated in reverie by the fire in a room unfrequented by the other guests, and speaking to nobody.[2]

[1] *C.A.*, 120C, f. 186. Courtin to Louvois, Oct. 29, 1676.
[2] *C.A.*, 120, f. 85. Courtin to Pomponne, Oct. 15, 1676.

The departure of St Réal brought Courtin another malicious shaft from Louvois, who, determined to keep up the pretence that the French Ambassador had lost his heart to the lovely Hortense, slily remarked, "I can easily guess the cause of his melancholy, if the stories that come from London of your relations with Madame Mazarin have any foundation." He was, however, genuinely anxious to know what could be St Réal's actual motive for leaving, and whether there was anything mysterious at the back of it. It appeared to him strange that a man so much in love as St Réal was known to be should quit the object of his love so suddenly, since neither he nor Madame Mazarin could have any serious business in France.[1] This comment shows that Courtin's repeated warnings had fallen on ears less deaf than he had imagined.

Rightly or wrongly the Duchess of Portsmouth had taken it into her head that the little Countess of Sussex was conducting the intrigue between the Duchesse Mazarin and her father, and so had conceived a mortal hatred for her. But she was not the only person to whom the fast alliance between Hortense and Lady Sussex was eminently disagreeable. The Earl of Sussex, a most upright and proper, but stupid and bad-tempered young man, was so incensed at his young wife's affection

[1] *C.A.*, 120C, f. 176. Louvois to Courtin, Oct. 21, 1676.

for this notorious adventuress that he threatened to leave her, unless she would give up her new-found friend and come to live with him in the country. This she flatly refused to do, for she had become passionately attached to the beautiful, brilliant woman, whose influence on her was no doubt far from being good. Her husband was probably alarmed lest Hortense should persuade his wife to follow her own evil precedent and leave him. Hortense and Lady Sussex were inseparable this autumn. In November they attended the Lord Mayor's Show together, and their balcony in Cheapside was the cynosure of all eyes, so much so indeed, that a volley of squibs was directed at them, one of which very nearly put out the young Countess's eye.[1]

The Court took sides in the dispute between the young husband and wife. The Duchess of Portsmouth's friends and most of the women supported Sussex, while the men gallantly declared for his wife. The Duchess of Cleveland, who was then in France, was induced to write to her daughter threatening that she would come home and take charge of her herself, if she continued to refuse obedience to her husband.[2] Lady Sussex, though still a mere child who cared for nothing but dancing and playing about from morning till

[1] *Belvoir MSS*, II, 31. Lady Chaworth to Lord Roos.
[2] *C.A.*, 120, f. 227. Courtin to Louvois, Nov. 30, 1676.

night,[1] showed a remarkable firmness in the face of this storm of opposition. No doubt she was greatly strengthened by the support of the King her father. He openly declared himself her partizan, which, says Courtin, made people think that Madame Mazarin must have considerable influence over him.[2] Charles told Courtin quite frankly that the indignation of the Duchess of Portsmouth and other ladies at Court against Lady Sussex was based on their belief that she was acting as go-between in an intrigue between himself and Madame Mazarin.[3]

Charles himself wrote to the Duchess of Cleveland, justifying their daughter's conduct, and he even promised Lady Sussex that he would support her against her mother if she did come back as she had threatened. Courtin divined the influence of the Duchesse Mazarin throughout the whole affair. " It is the touchstone of her credit," he declared, " the most enlightened courtiers consider it surely established in spite of the feints that are made to deceive the public."[4] Courtin was unwilling to commit himself definitely on the subject; all he would say was that the King very often slept out and did not come back till five in the morning. It was, however, inconceivable that he was spending

[1] *C.A.*, 120C. Courtin to Louvois, Nov. 29, 1676.
[2] *C.A.*, 120, f. 227. Courtin to Louvois, Nov. 30, 1676.
[3] *C.A.*, 120, f. 244. Courtin to Pomponne, Dec. 3, 1676.
[4] *Ibid.*

his nights with the Duchess of Portsmouth. "He renders her all respect during the day, but he reserves himself the liberty of passing the night with whom he pleases."[1]

Lord Sussex's prejudice against Hortense came to a head when he was informed of an escapade in which she and his wife had taken part. During the autumn Hortense and her friend had amused themselves by taking fencing-lessons, and one day they determined to give others an opportunity of appraising their skill in that noble exercise. As Lady Chaworth records in a letter to her brother Lord Roos, they "went downe into St James's Park the other day with drawne swords under their night gownes, which they drew out and made several fine passes, much to the admiration of severall men that was lookers-on in the Parke."[2]

This public exhibition was apparently too much even for the King, and he informed Lady Sussex that her mother had written to him in such pressing terms that he had had to consent to her husband's taking her away into the country until the opening of Parliament.[3] And so Lord Sussex bore his wife away in triumph to one of his country seats, Hurstmonceaux Castle in Sussex. The emotional effect of Hortense's personality on the little

[1] *C.A.*, 120C. Courtin to Louvois, Dec. 27, 1676.
[2] *Belvoir MSS*, II, 34.
[3] *C.A.*, 122, f. 26. Courtin to Pomponne, Jan. 11, 1677.

Countess must have been very powerful, for the unfortunate child pined in the country to such an extent that doctors had to be sent for from London to attend her. But soon the healthy open-air life in the country began to work upon her; she rapidly regained her strength and spirits amid the delights of hunting the hare and fox. Nevertheless, she was far from forgetting the friend she loved so passionately; she still kept her portrait always with her and would often take it out and cover it with kisses.[1]

[1] *Belvoir MSS*, II, 36. Lady Chaworth to Lord Roos.

CHAPTER X

An unexpected encounter—Nell Gwyn displays her petticoats—Hortense at the zenith of her favour—Reconciliation between Hortense and Louise—The scene at Courtin's supper-party—Apparent sincerity of their friendship—Amazement of the Court—Rumours about Hortense's return to France—Hortense now Charles's declared mistress—Sudden improvement in her finances—Her liveries—Negotiations of Nevers and St Réal with Mazarin—Courtin expostulates—Charles renews his efforts to get Hortense's pension increased—Obduracy of Mazarin—Charles shows his displeasure—Assignations of Hortense and Charles—Hortense's lack of interest in politics—St Réal tries to return—The Duchesse Mazarin as news-hawker—A French comedy at Whitehall—Invasion and repulse of Sidonia de Courcelles—Charles gives Hortense a pension—Mazarin's view of the matter—Inconstancy of Hortense—The Prince de Monaco her favoured suitor—Charles revokes her pension—But restores it to her later—The end of her brief ascendancy.

At first all the French Ambassador's attempts to effect a reconciliation between the two Duchesses were unavailing. They avoided each other as much as possible, confining themselves to paying such formal calls upon each other as etiquette and good manners positively demanded. It chanced that, on one memorable occasion when the Duchess of Portsmouth was paying one of her very infrequent calls on the Duchesse Mazarin, Lady Harvey also made her appearance accompanied by Nell Gwyn, who desired to thank Hortense for the compliments

she had sent her on the occasion of the recognition of her son by the King. By a stroke of luck Courtin happened to be present at the scene ; he would never have been able to forgive himself had he missed it. " Everything passed off quite gaily and with many civilities from one to the other," he says, " but I do not suppose that in all England it would be possible to get together three people more obnoxious to one another." As soon as the Duchess of Portsmouth had taken her leave, the atmosphere became slightly less constrained : Hortense and Nell, even if they were rivals, could at least understand each other. Mistrisnelle, as Courtin so delightfully calls her, was in one of her merry moods this day. She joked shamelessly with the French Ambassador about her relations with the King, assuring him that she did better service to him than ever the Duchess of Portsmouth could do. After this she created great diversion by lifting her petticoats one after the other and giving the beholders ocular and convincing proof that her under-garments were just as pretty as they were reputed to be. Courtin related all this to Pomponne, but intimated that his great regard for that gentleman's gravity had prevented him from dilating so much on the subject as he would have done had he been writing to someone else.[1] He need not have perturbed

[1] *C.A.*, 122, f. 52. Courtin to Pomponne, Jan. 18, 1677.

himself, for even the serious Pomponne was delighted by this account of Nelly's vagaries. "I am sure you forgot all your troubles when you were making Mistriss Nesle raise those neat and magnificent petticoats of hers. As you tell me that Madame Mazarin's favour is increasing, it would be well if when you are writing through reliable channels you were to inform His Majesty, as you have done in your last letters, concerning the intrigues of the Court where you are."[1]

If the attentions of courtiers are any criterion, Hortense had indeed attained the zenith of her favour. Her apartments were thronged, and a phalanx of the Duchess of Portsmouth's enemies formed round her. Foremost among them were Lord Arlington and the Duke of Monmouth, both of whom held Louise in cordial detestation.[2]

The subtle diplomacy of Courtin at length succeeded in bringing about the much to be desired reconciliation between Hortense and Louise. It was effected with the most consummate tact, and he himself judiciously avoided appearing the prime mover in the matter. Meeting Lady Harvey and Mrs Middleton one day at the theatre, he induced them to suggest that they should bring both Hortense and Louise to supper with him one evening. In case the plan should go

[1] *C.A.*, 123A, f. 120. Pomponne to Courtin, Feb. 2, 1677.
[2] *C.A.*, 122, f. 52. Courtin to Pomponne, Jan. 18, 1677.

NELL GWYN

Sir P. Lely. National Portrait Gallery

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awry, he cleverly succeeded in throwing all responsibility on them by telling them that when he himself chose the company he took great care not to invite people who disliked each other in the same party, but that when he did not issue the invitations himself he regarded himself simply as an ambassador, whose doors were open to all. And so it came about that the momentous party was held. The Duchess of Portsmouth brought with her Sophia Bulkeley, younger sister of La Belle Stuart, the famous and beautiful Duchess of Richmond. This was the first time that Louise and Hortense had ever sat down at the same table together.

The method adopted to force the two rivals to a better understanding, although somewhat crude, proved effective. Courtin caused them to be locked up in a closet together. This simple expedient might well have resulted in their tearing out each other's hair, but strange to relate it did not. Perhaps the French Ambassador's excellent fare had been the means of inducing sweet reasonableness in both of them: at all events when the door was unlocked Louise and Hortense issued forth hand in hand and came skipping and dancing down the stairway. "If I were still a plenipotentiary," declared Courtin proudly, "I should not despair of making peace after having succeeded in a negotiation which the whole

English Court believed to be very difficult." Charles II, he felt, would be hugely amused when he was told what had happened, and doubtless he was, for nothing in the world delighted his sense of humour so much as situations of this kind.[1]

What is really remarkable is that this post-prandial reconciliation actually lasted. The supper-party was even repeated at the request of the ladies themselves. One evening in Lent, when there was no sort of entertainment at Court, Hortense, Louise, Lady Harvey, and Mrs Middleton again besought Courtin to give an informal party for them. The Court was duly amazed. "The English are rather astonished," remarked Courtin, "since their private feuds are more violent than ours and they do not trouble about keeping up appearances."[2] Therein probably lay the truth of the matter: it is difficult to believe that this apparent friendship can have been sincere. Nevertheless both ladies continued to play their parts admirably. The Duchess of Portsmouth gave a magnificent banquet in honour of her rival, and they were even to be seen driving together in the same carriage, "to the great astonishment of the English, who were no less surprised to see Monsieur de Montagu's sister in

[1] *C.A.*, 122, f. 115. Courtin to Pomponne, Feb. 4, 1677.
[2] *C.A.*, 122, f. 204. Courtin to Pomponne, March 4, 1677.

the same company. If Parliament were as tractable as the ladies (whose hate nevertheless is usually implacable enough in this country), I should not despair of winning it over."[1]

Renewed efforts to persuade Hortense to return to France seem to have been made at the beginning of this year. St Réal's sudden arrival in Paris had caused a good deal of speculation. He spoke about Hortense with great bitterness, and announced his intention of retiring to Piedmont with all speed. " It will be no great loss for her," remarked Louvois with some perspicacity. But the situation was far from being clear : there were wheels within wheels and countless cross-intrigues at this time. Louvois found it impossible to reconcile what Courtin told him of Hortense's sincere desire to return to France with the Abbé de St Réal's round assertion that she was now the King of England's mistress.[2] While admitting that the two statements seemed incompatible, Courtin was ready with an explanation.

" I agree with the Abbé de St Réal that Madame Mazarin is engaged in a regular liaison with the King of Great Britain. Madame de Portsmouth does not doubt it, and the whole Court is of this opinion. But as it is rather the result of necessity than an affair of the heart, if she were assured that

[1] *C.A.*, 123C, f. 176. Courtin to Louvois, March 25, 1677.
[2] *C.A.*, 123C, Louvois to Courtin, Jan. 3, 1677.

she would not have to sleep with her husband, for whom, it appears to me, she has an insuperable aversion, she would be very tempted to return to Paris. She has had a livery made more magnificent than any with which you are acquainted. The lace cost three livres, fifteen sols the French ell, and the coats are quite hidden by it. There are nine of them with which to array two porters, six lackeys, and a page, and with the cravats they cost two thousand six hundred livres. She keeps an excellent table. In a word her expenditure far exceeds the eight thousand crowns which she receives through Monsieur Colbert. And so it is quite clear that she must be receiving assistance from other quarters."[1]

Although Courtin was in no manner of doubt as to the true identity of the source from which Hortense's increased affluence was derived, he declared that he was not in the secret, and disclaimed having taken any part in bringing about the present situation.[2] The advice he had always proffered was that she should be induced to return to France, or, failing this, that pecuniary assistance should be given to her so that she should not be driven to seek funds from some quarter that might be inimical to France. But, as he complained with bitterness, every time he

[1] *C.A.*, 123C, f. 24. Courtin to Louvois, Jan. 14, 1677.
[2] *Ibid.*

had ventured to express this opinion he had been accused of being in love with the lady.

Hortense's sudden access of extravagance was the only thing needed to confirm the prevailing suspicions that she had become Charles II's mistress. For how long it had been going on nobody could say, probably for several months, but it was not until the beginning of this year that all attempts at concealment were abandoned. Considering all the circumstances, it had seemed inevitable from the first. Hortense's rather flamboyant Southern beauty was of the kind now most calculated to rouse the King's jaded appetite, and, although she was now thirty, an age at which her type of beauty has usually coarsened, if it has not disappeared altogether, she had never been lovelier. During the autumn she had been ill and had grown rather thin, but she had now recovered all her brilliance, and her beauty was at the very zenith of its perfection.[1]

The position of official mistress to the King of England was by no means uncongenial to a woman with Hortense's utter disregard for conventional morality, so that everyone found it a little difficult to give credit to the rumours that she had herself initiated negotiations for her return to France. Nevertheless it appears to have been quite true that at her request her brother the Duc de Nevers

[1] *C.A.*, 123C, f. 34. Courtin to Louvois, Jan. 21, 1677.

was holding discussions with Armand Mazarin with a view to an accommodation. Stranger still, St Réal also was taking part in the negotiations.[1] Louvois professed himself completely puzzled by the situation. "I understand nothing of what I hear said of Madame Mazarin, since, while those who are in the know believe that she is favoured by the King of England, they say here that she is about to be reconciled to her husband and that the Abbé de St Réal, who formerly was the most opposed to this reconciliation, is now arranging it."[2]

Courtin was able to tell Louvois that there was more than an element of truth in all these rumours; but that nothing was likely to come of the efforts of Nevers and St Réal, since the Duke remained as obstinate as ever and did nothing but write ridiculously pompous letters which might be mistaken for very bad sermons. Moreover, so far as he could judge, Nevers was approaching the matter with a nonchalance remarkable even in him, and was in fact throwing the burden of the negotiation on St Réal. But it was not to be expected that the Duc would give in on any point, and Courtin was convinced that the Duchesse would have to remain in England and replenish her resources as she could. It was impossible for

[1] *C.A.*, 123C, f. 38. Louvois to Courtin, Jan. 23, 1677.
[2] *C.A.*, 123C, f. 44. Louvois to Courtin, Jan. 26, 1677.

her to live on her existing allowance, which was quite inadequate in this country where the women were very extravagant.[1]

Judging from the policy which Hortense subsequently pursued in regard to her return to France, it seems likely that she was engaged in these negotiations merely in order to give colour to her steadfast contention that she always had been and always would be ready and willing to return to her husband on reasonable conditions. In reality she never had any intention whatsoever of going back to him ; but it suited her admirably to keep a semblance of right on her side, and she knew that she could securely rely on the fact that her husband would never be brought to see reason. She never, however, abandoned the hope that he might eventually be induced to increase her allowance, and she continued to make use of every available channel to persuade Louis XIV to put pressure on her husband in the matter. The French Ambassador, she knew, was her firm ally. He had recently written in very strong terms to Pomponne deprecating the King's reluctance to help Hortense. What pained him most, he said, was the attitude adopted in France that he was merely making these representations on her behalf because he had fallen in love with her. " His Majesty's judgment and yours are founded on an

[1] *C.A.*, 123 C,f. 65. Courtin to Louvois, Feb. 4, 1677.

appearance of truth rather than on truth itself," he plaintively declared. Considering that Hortense was now definitely the King of England's mistress he could not understand why no effort was made to conciliate her and to gain her support for French interests. " It is," he said, " a policy that beats me."[1]

Charles himself had also taken a hand in the recently renewed attempts to persuade or force Mazarin to increase his wife's pension, and he had again written personally to Louis XIV asking him to intervene. Louis had replied that he had done his best, but that the Duc had resisted all arguments and persuasions, and he felt that this was scarcely an occasion that would warrant the assertion of his absolute authority.[2]

Charles was visibly annoyed when Courtin handed him the King of France's letter. " I have just given the King's letter to the King of Great Britain. His expression changed while he was reading it and he did not say anything to me after he had finished it, but I could see that the answer did not please him. He did not believe that Monsieur Mazarin could be won over, but he had imagined that some consideration would be shown to his request and that the King himself would have done something for her. You know what

[1] *C.A.*, 122, f. 132. Courtin to Pomponne, Feb. 11, 1677.
[2] *C.A.*, 123A, f. 183. Pomponne to Courtin, Feb. 24, 1677.

one feels on the subject of ladies who attract one and how reasons of justice and good taste seem weak when they are opposed to the feelings of the heart. I could have wished that this had happened at another time."[1]

Meanwhile Hortense herself remained serenely unperturbed. Louis XIV's refusal to help seems to have amused more than irritated her ; Courtin caught her laughing about it with Lady Harvey.[2] The fact of the matter was that the only thing in the world that ever worried her was lack of money, and she now had every reason to suppose that she might draw upon the purse of His Majesty of England. The very day on which she received Louis' letter regretting his inability to give her any assistance, she had just been shut up for four hours with Charles in some private apartments to which only the King himself and one confidential servant possessed keys.[3]

To Courtin's heartfelt relief he soon found that the political consequences he had dreaded did not come to pass. Hortense was not vindictive by nature, and she was not at all disposed now to take her revenge for the neglect of her interest shown by Louis XIV and his ministers, though she easily could have done so had she wished.

[1] *C.A.*, 122, f. 187. Courtin to Pomponne, March 1, 1677.
[2] *C.A.*, 122, f. 204. Courtin to Pomponne, March 4, 1677.
[3] *Ibid.*

Far from displaying hostility she asked Courtin to assure the King that she would always be loyal to France. At the same time, however, she intimated that Louis must not be worried any more with her affairs, since she saw that he was no longer as fond of her as he had been once and believed that someone had been prejudicing him against her.[1]

If her attitude relieved the French Ambassador, it cannot have pleased Montagu and his friends, who had been counting on her to help them to oust Danby and then allow them to govern the King through her. It is strange that it had not occurred to them that her entire lack of interest in matters political would be bound to render her useless as a tool. Even now it was some time before they realised that it was no manner of use counting on her for help. Arlington and Lady Harvey were both hovering around her in the hope of being able to exploit for their own private ends the influence they thought she was likely to obtain over Charles. But Charles II's love for Hortense was an ignoble thing at its best : her physical attractions appealed to him enormously, but his heart was never engaged, and he never lost his head once in the whole course of this affair. Courtin was not even alarmed at the machinations of Arlington and Lady Harvey. " The King of England is a gallant

[1] *C.A.*, 122, f. 204. Courtin to Pomponne, March 4, 1677.

enough man to profit by their designs and yet mock at them," he declared.[1]

St Réal continued to afford surprises. When he had first come to Paris he had maligned Hortense and had never spoken of her save with extreme bitterness ; then he had suddenly begun to act as her agent in her negotiations with her husband ; now he agilely turned another half-somersault and informed her that he desired nothing more than to be allowed to return to her. Some rumour of this move on his part reached Louvois, who was a little astonished ; since he was aware that St Réal was on the point of starting for Piedmont and had already secured his seat in the Lyons coach. Hortense and her friends kept the unfortunate Louvois in a constant state of bewilderment this spring. But St Réal was not to obtain his desire. Although Hortense at first seemed inclined to let him return, both Courtin and her new and ardent admirer the Prince de Monaco impressed upon her that his return would only cause a scandal, especially after the calumnies he had spread about her when he had first left her, and she eventually allowed herself to be persuaded by them and forbade his return.[2]

Throughout this spring Hortense was the King's declared mistress. The first sign of her recognition

[1] *C.A.*, 122, f. 204. Courtin to Pomponne, March 4, 1677.
[2] *C.A.*, 123C, ff. 109 and 118. Courtin to Louvois, Feb. 25 and March 1, 1677.

as such was when she had appeared in a very prominent position, raised above all the other ladies behind the throne, at the opening of Parliament.[1] She still remained on the friendliest possible terms with the French Ambassador, who, rejoiced to find that she was not going to throw in her lot with the enemies of France, lost no opportunity of informing the French authorities of her great enthusiasm for the French cause. "Madame Mazarin is already training to be a news-hawker," he told Louvois, "my despatches were brought to me at her lodging on the day when I received the news of the capture of Valenciennes. There were ten accounts of it, but none so good as yours. She took them all, and while I was reading my other letters she stalked up and down the four rooms that compose her little lodging, passing and repassing me and crying in a news-hawker's voice: 'Capture of Valenciennes by the King's Army commanded by His Majesty!' Several times I felt inclined to curse the hawker!"[2]

In compliment to Hortense the English Court affected French manners and customs more than ever this summer. On May the 29th high festival was held at Whitehall in honour of the King's birthday, and a French comedy was played.

[1] *C.A.*, 123C, f. 109. Courtin to Louvois, Feb. 25, 1677.
[2] *C.A.*, 123C, f. 118. Courtin to Louvois, March 22, 1677.

But this sort of entertainment had always been beyond the capacity of the English Court, and the present performance showed no improvement, in spite of the fact that it appears to have been arranged by St Evremond. At any rate he it was who had to bear the blame, for although he protested that he had had nothing to do with the arrangements, it was proved that he had been directing two rehearsals on the eve of the performance. Courtin succinctly declared that the comedy was detestable and the music no better.[1]

When Hortense had told Courtin that the King of France was no longer to be worried about her affairs she apparently did not intend the exemption to apply to his ministers as well; for on July the 6th Courtin was again writing to Louvois on her behalf and once more repeating all his old arguments. "I tell you again, Monsieur, since she is so beautiful she must either be removed from here or placed beyond necessity. The Duke of York sent two days ago by his treasurer to offer her two thousand pounds. She refused them, but as she has no more than four thousand francs to spend here, she will not always be able to refuse." Writing in the same letter of Montagu's affection for Hortense, he remarked, without being conscious how aptly the sentiment applied to himself: "It is dangerous to be the friend of so

[1] *C.A.*, 123, f. 245. Courtin to Pomponne, June 10th, 1677.

beautiful a person; sometimes one becomes involved more than one wishes."[1] Louis XIV, Louvois, and Pomponne were all quite convinced that Courtin himself had become "involved," if not more than he wished, at any rate more than they wished, and in consequence no remark he made about Hortense was ever taken seriously by any of them.

This summer Hortense's old acquaintance, the Marquise de Courcelles, came over to England. Courtin announces her arrival in a despatch of July the 9th, adding with some point that England was a haven for all the women who had quarrelled with their husbands.[2] Sidonia too had avowedly come over on the same errand as Hortense herself, namely that of gaining the favours of the susceptible King of England together with his moral and above all his financial support. She appears to have been a very attractive creature, even if only a half of her own generous account of her charms is to be credited. "I am tall. I have an admirable figure. My eyes are rather large and I never open them fully, which is a charm that gives me the sweetest and tenderest look imaginable. My throat is well modelled, my hands divine, my arms passable; that is to say a little thin, but I am consoled for this misfortune by the

[1] *C.A.*, 123C, f. 344. Courtin to Louvois, July 6th, 1677.
[2] *C.A.*, 124, f. 85. Courtin to Pomponne.

pleasure of having the most beautiful legs in the world."[1]

Hortense was well aware that this paragon might prove a dangerous rival, if she were ever allowed to try her wiles on the King, so she determined to nip her budding aspirations before they unclosed. She gently but firmly informed her erstwhile friend that the position she coveted was already suitably filled, and this so recently that it would be some time before other competitors could hope for any success. The gentle hint that she would merely be wasting her time by remaining in England proved effective, and the fair Sidonia returned to France with her heart still whole and her hands still empty.

Another old companion of the Duchess Mazarin had also come over to England in the spring of this year. This was the Comte de St Maurice, who had been a friend and neighbour of hers in Savoy. It was at once suspected that Hortense was the attraction that had drawn him into England, but Courtin denied that there was any foundation for the rumour, declaring that he had come over on some meaningless mission, having been exiled from Savoy under pretence of doing him honour.[2]

Now that Hortense was, in Courtin's exquisitely delicate phrase, "on as good terms with the King as it is possible for a beautiful woman to

[1] *Mémoires et Correspondances de la Marquise de Courcelles.*
[2] *C.A.*, 123C, f. 251. Courtin to Louvois, April 17, 1677.

be,"[1] Charles came to the conclusion that he himself had certain obligations towards her. In return for her complaisance he granted her a pension of £4,000. As soon as Mazarin heard of this he tried to persuade Louis XIV to allow him to stop paying her any allowance at all, and actually succeeded in gaining permission to withhold all payments after Hortense had been in England for two years and still showed no disposition to come home. Mazarin salved his conscience by contending that the pension paid to his wife in England was merely a repayment of the money owed to the Mazarin estate by Charles II, who had in former years borrowed heavily from the Cardinal, and consequently, though in a somewhat indirect manner, really emanated from himself. At the same time he could not refrain from pointing out to Charles II that the money ought to be paid to him and not to his wife, and sent a special messenger to England to warn the King that his wife's receipts for the money were not valid. Charles merely smiled and replied that it did not matter very much as he did not propose to take any. And at any rate he did not admit any such debt existed.[2]

Had Hortense possessed any political ambition or had she even boasted a more stable disposition,

[1] *C.A.*, 123, f. 132. Courtin to Pomponne, Feb. 11, 1677.
[2] *Œuvres de St Evremond*, 1739, V, 212.

now was the time when Courtin's fears as to the results of her ascendancy might have been realised. Whether Louis with his thorough knowledge of her character had counted on the unlikelihood of her remaining Charles's mistress for long it is difficult to say, but his policy of doing nothing about her proved fully justified in the event. Hortense's amorous disposition and volatile temperament made it impossible for her to remain faithful to one lover for long. The King of England was not made an exception to her rule of inconstancy. Several times he felt constrained to remonstrate with her for lending too favourable an ear to the advances of other admirers; but he found it quite impossible to pass over her conduct with the young and handsome Prince de Monaco, whom she had known in Savoy and who was then on a visit to England that had already extended considerably beyond the few days he had originally arranged to stay.

Courtin, always on the watch where Hortense was concerned, had at first thought that the Prince would have no chance of gaining her favours. "Monsieur de Monaco is the most in love of all men," he had written this January, "but his profound melancholy makes me doubtful whether his love will be successful."[1] Hortense certainly did keep him at arm's length for some time, though

[1] *C.A.*, 123C, f. 34. Courtin to Louvois, Jan. 21, 1677.

she was always kind enough to him to leave him with some faint hopes. Perhaps it was his threat to leave England that finally made her give in. Courtin speaks of this in a despatch of July the 9th, 1677. "The Prince de Monaco, being unable to rid himself of a tertiary fever or of another disease which affects his heart, has resolved at last upon a change of air, but I will not answer for it that he will be strong enough to carry out his resolution."[1] The weakness of Hortense's virtue dispensed him from this test of strength. Her favours to him were very soon not even disguised, and she was candid enough to make it quite clear to Charles that it would be foolish to rely on her fidelity to him. The King was not unnaturally incensed. He even went to the length of revoking her pension, though his natural generosity as always overcame his resentment in the end and it was not long before he restored it to her.[2] But she had overshot the mark with the Prince de Monaco, she had overstepped the bounds of the King's patience, and the brief spell of her ascendancy was at an end.

[1] *C.A.*, 124, f. 100. Courtin to Pomponne, July 29, 1677.
[2] Des Maizeaux. *Life of St E.*, lxxv.

CHAPTER XI

Triumphant return of the Duchess of Portsmouth—Disappointment of St Evremond—Hortense's lack of political ambition—Barillon scarcely ever mentions her name—Allusions to her in lampoons—Her love of pleasure—Her admirers—The Conde de Castelmelhor—Her friends—St Evremond—His professed passion for her—His countless odes to her—Ninon de Lenclos—St Evremond's description of Hortense's life in England—Hortense lacerates her chaplain's ear—She takes to gambling—The croupier Morin—Hortense's fondness for animals—Her aviary—St Evremond and a whistling sparrow—Hortense rides at Newmarket—Her extravagance—The excellence of her table—Her household—Her genius for dress—Duel between the Chevalier de Soissons and Baron Banér—Madame de Sévigné's comment—Extravagant grief of Hortense—She thinks of entering a convent—Delight of Mazarin—He sends Madame de Ruz to her—St Evremond remonstrates—Hortense changes her mind—What Evelyn saw at Whitehall—Death of Charles II—Hortense weeps for him.

The Duchess of Portsmouth came back triumphant to queen it over the King and Court of England, and Hortense accepted her dismissal with the best grace in the world. Devoid of ambition, uninterested in politics as she was, so long as she had the wherewithal to gratify her somewhat expensive tastes she would always be perfectly contented. She had had no wish to rule the King's heart for ever; she infinitely preferred to hold sway for a time over a succession

of hearts. Her friend St Evremond was at a loss to understand her lack of ambition and in one of his poems reproached her with her failure to seize the magnificent opportunities that had been within her grasp.

Vous êtes adorée en cent et cent climats,
Toutes les Nations sont vos propres Etats,
Et de petits Esprits vous nomment Vagabonde,
Quand vous allez régner en tous les lieux du monde,
Il ne vous restoit plus qu'à régner sur les mers,
Votre nouvel Empire embrasse l'Univers ;
Et de nos Îles fortunées
Vous pourriez des mortels régler les destinées.
Plus puissante aujourd' hui que n'étoient les Romains,
Vous feriez des sujets de tous les Souverains,
Si vous n'apportiez pas plus de soin et d'étude
Pour votre liberté que pour leur servitude.[1]

St Evremond spoke truly, for it was freedom that Hortense craved. Always she had hated being tied to anything or to anybody save by those silken bonds of love that can so easily be unloosened or burst asunder. From now onwards she became a mere butterfly far beneath the notice of ministers and ambassadors. In sharp contrast with the weighty passage concerning her in the "Instructions" given to Courtin in the previous year, those of Barillon, who came over in August,

[1] *Œuvres de St Evremond*, 1739, IV, 245. There is a slightly absurd translation of the first four lines of this poem in Des Maizeaux' English edition of the *Works*, 1728, II, 318.

All climes and countries do adore her,
Fresh triumphs on her Beauties wait.
The world unjustly calls her Rover,
She only views the limits of her State.

1677, to succeed Courtin, contained no mention of her whatsoever. Nor does her name often occur in Barillon's despatches. But this perhaps was not only because, being no longer Charles II's mistress, she had ceased to be of any international significance, but also because Barillon was more serious-minded than Courtin and displayed considerably less taste and talent for amusing gossip. Almost his only allusion to her is contained in a despatch of February the 9th, 1682, when it appears that Charles was once more making an effort to regain for her the pension which her husband had ceased paying to her. Even then Hortense asked the Ambassador to assure Louis XIV that she had not asked the King of England to make this request for her and that she expected nothing save from the kindness and protection of His Majesty of France.[1] Louis seems to have ignored this request altogether; at any rate there is no mention of it in the letter of February the 28th in which he refers to the other matters contained in Barillon's despatch.[2]

All the time she was in England Hortense never made any attempt to interfere in politics or affairs of state. It is true that she was amongst those against whom Titus Oates in 1678 made accusations of being concerned in all the designs against

[1] *C.A.*, 146, f. 142. Barillon to Louis XIV.
[2] *Ibid*, f. 166, Louis XIV to Barillon $\frac{18}{28}$, Feb. 1677.

the Protestant religion, but then few Catholics, however innocent, escaped his calumnies. The best refutation of all such charges against her is contained in the report in 1680 of a certain Father Oliva concerning a supposed remark of hers that it would be very easy to kill the King. He categorically declared that she seemed more disposed to divert herself than to take any serious interest in matters political or religious.[1] Allusions to her in contemporary lampoons are invariably confined to crude but perhaps not altogether undeserved aspersions on her virtue. A most violent and quite unrepeatable attack on her was made in *Rochester's Farewell to Court*, 1680.[2] In this she was compared greatly to her disadvantage with Messalina!

The pursuit of pleasure was Hortense's one and only object in life; and much of it she found in a succession of love-affairs. It is said that her lovers were many and of divers nationalities, but unfortunately the names of few of the favoured ones have come down to posterity, though that of one unsuccessful suitor is recorded. This was the Portuguese Ambassador, the Conde de Castelmelhor, who became the laughing-stock of the Court owing to the hound-like pertinacity with which he pursued the unwilling object of his

[1] *Hist. MSS. Comm. Report*, XI, II, 238.
[2] Printed in the *Poems on Affairs of State*, 1703.

infatuation. Charles II, it appears, again received her favours from time to time, but he scarcely ever attempted to interfere with her other loves, save on one occasion when he summarily put a stop to her renewed intimacy with Ralph Montagu. The Countess of Sunderland records that "Mr. Mountague goes no more to Madam Mazarin's, the town says he is forbid ; whether his love or his politics were too pressing I know not."[1] The likeliest explanation is that Charles feared that Montagu wished to involve Hortense once again in his political trinketings.

Though of supreme importance, Love was not quite everything to Hortense. Since her sojourn in Chambéry she had begun to display some interest in Literature and Art, and her lodging in London became a place of reunion for learned and brilliant men as well as for the rank and fashion of the land. Gossip and scandal would alternate with the gravest philosophical discussions. Frenchmen were always made particularly welcome by her, and two of her closest friends were Lord Feversham[2] and Lord Galway,[3] who were both of that

[1] Lady Sunderland to Mr. Sidney, March 22, 1680. *Sidney Correspondence*, II, 12.

[2] Louis Duras, Earl of Feversham, Marquis de Blanquefort in France : naturalised in England in 1665. He commanded James II's troops at the battle of Sedgemoor.

[3] Henri de Massue de Ruvigny, Earl of Galway, a distinguished soldier. A Frenchman, in command of English troops, he was defeated at Almanza, 1707, by French troops commanded by the Duke of Berwick, an Englishman.

nationality. Among others who regularly frequented her apartments were the poet Edmund Waller, Charles, Lord Buckhurst, afterwards Earl of Dorset, and author of that fine ballad, *To all you ladies now on land*, and the Earl of Mulgrave, who also, in his own estimation at least, was no mean poet. Among the ladies were Lady Sandwich, the daughter of Charles's boon-companion Rochester, and Mrs. Hyde, daughter-in-law of the famous Chancellor Clarendon. Hortense's most intimate women-friends were the beautiful Jane Middleton and Charlotte Beverweert. This lady, who was Lady of the Bedchamber to the Princess Anne, seems of her own accord to have assumed much the same sort of position with Hortense, upon whom she waited hand and foot.

The most outstanding figure during this part of Hortense's life was St Evremond, who found her personality most stimulating to his pen, and produced an amazingly prolific output of dissertations in prose and verse on various subjects directly or indirectly inspired by her. He had rapidly rendered himself indispensable to her, and had constituted himself a sort of unofficial Counsellor and Secretary of State to her. His relations with her were very extraordinary. He was very much older than Hortense, having been born in 1613, but he always professed a burning passion for her. Doubtless he himself did not intend this to be

taken too seriously, though he was assiduous in keeping up the illusion, and would frequently complain in his verses of the harsh treatment she meted out to him, and harp upon the disadvantages which his great age placed him at with her.

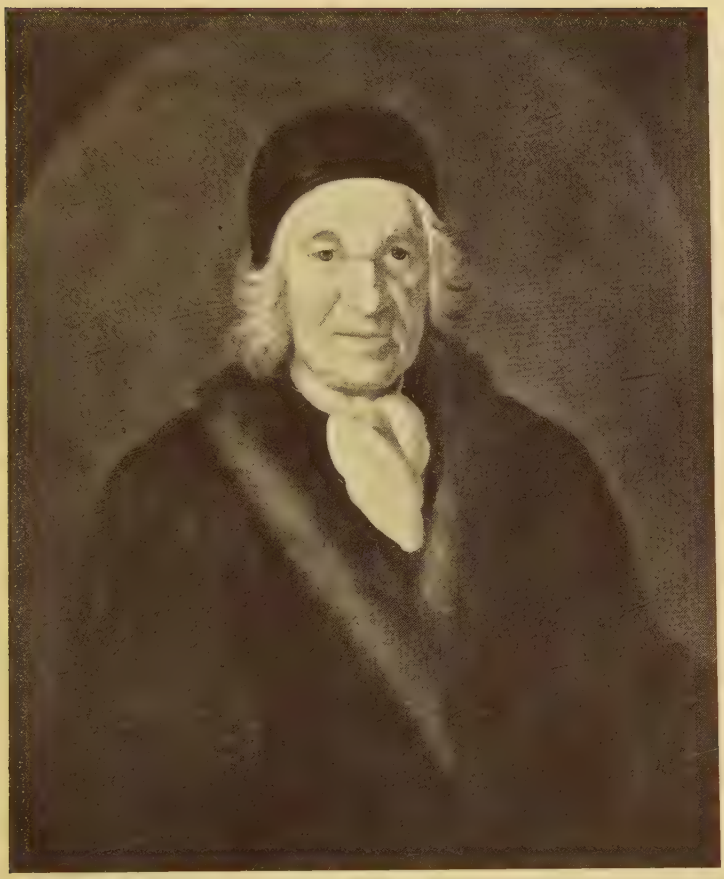
> J'ai voulu devenir Amant,
> On me veut Ami seulement :
> Ami, traité d'une manière,
> Quelquefois douce et familière ;
> Mais indignement rebuté
> S'il prend la moindre liberté.[1]

This curious friendship was quite inexplicable to most of their contemporaries. Probably the only person who understood the real nature of it was Ninon de Lenclos, to whom St Evremond was wont to confide everything. But then Ninon was one of the clearest thinkers of the century. Strange and unorthodox as her notions about love may have been, she knew more about friendship in its various kinds than anyone else of her time. A chivalrous friendship, this, at least on the part of St Evremond—and he himself seems to have realised that there was something quixotic in it, for he used to sign his letters to Hortense : " Le Chevalier de la Triste Figure," and occasionally even persuaded her to subscribe herself " Dulcinée."[2]

[1] St Evremond, *Œuvres*, 1739, V, 26.
[2] *Ibid*, V, 407.

Besides the inordinate amount of work both in prose and verse which he addressed to the Duchesse Mazarin, he used to write most of her important letters for her, especially those dealing with her relations with her husband, a theme which needed very tactful handling. St Evremond had a passion for expressing himself in verse, and the most inconsiderable incident in Hortense's career was immediately and inevitably commemorated by him. He sent her Odes on her birthday, on the New Year, on her very slightest indisposition, on the loss of her pet white sparrow. When she was away from London he would bombard her with letters, and would endeavour to dissuade her from taking the waters when she was at Bath. "The best of waters often do ill to those who are well, and rarely do well to those who are ill," he informed her.[1] Plays and dialogues in abundance portrayed with some poetic licence the everyday events in her house. There is a scene representing her playing at basset with Mrs Middleton and other friends, while the rumoured death of her husband produced the gayest and most exuberant of little comedies. On one occasion in 1684 when Hortense was ill and depressed and began to wonder idly what people would say of her after her death, St Evremond hastened from her bedside and returned a little later to cheer her into

[1] St Evremond, *Œuvres*, V, 141.



ST. EVREMOND

J. Parmentier. National Portrait Gallery

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convalescence with his " Funeral Oration on the Duchess de Mazarin."

St Evremond's work as a whole offers a picture of Hortense's life in England that is as intimate and detailed as an interior by some great Dutch master of the period. In it may be found odd little facts about her of a kind that usually remain unrecorded. For instance it appears that her ideas of fresh air and cleanliness were more characteristic of the present age than of her own. St Evremond complained bitterly that her house was always draughty, because she would keep the doors and windows open, and he sets down as a truly remarkable fact that she was constantly having her rooms swept out and cleaned.

One little incident that occurred would no doubt have been noted down by any observer even if he did not happen to be a St Evremond. Going by chance into her apartment one day he found her on her knees before her confessor, Milon, who was seated in a chair bleeding profusely. When he came closer he perceived that in attempting to pierce the luckless ecclesiastic's ears to enable him to wear earrings, she had inadvertently cut a bit out of one of them. Roman Catholic priests were, of course, at this time proscribed in England by the severe penal laws, but St Evremond averred that the law of England had let Milon go free

in order that he might be reserved for a worse martyrdom at the hands of Hortense.[1]

The predilection for gambling which the Duchesse Mazarin had recently begun to evince was a great source of anxiety to the faithful St Evremond. He complained that since she had taken it up she had had no further use for philosophy, and the level of conversation at her house had fallen considerably. Since the croupier Morin, who had fled from Paris, had appeared at her house and introduced the game of basset into England, her learned friends scarce dared to show their countenances there. The grave Van Beuning, Vossius, and Justel all received the cold shoulder.

Que sert a ces messieurs leur illustre science ?
A peine leur fait-on la simple révérence,
Et les pauvres savants, interdits et confus,
Regardent Mazarin, qui ne les connaît plus.
Hortense joue à la bassette,
Aussi longtemps que veut Morin.
Que le soleil vienne éclairer le monde
Il vous voit la carte à la main :
Que lasse de son cours il repose sous l'onde,
Vous veillez jusqu'au lendemain ;
Plus d'Opéra, plus de Musique,
De Morale, de Politique.

Beaux yeux, quel est votre destin !
Périrez-vous, beaux yeux, à regarder Morin.[2]

Not even the disagreeable sight of Morin could keep St Evremond himself from continuing to

[1] St Evremond, *Œuvres*, V, 296.
[2] *Ibid*, IV, 161.

frequent the house. Nor could anything stem the flow of his pen's eloquence. He proceeded to taunt Hortense on the subject of her gambling and wrote her a long succession of letters and poems reproaching her with her complete absorption in cards and her consequent neglect of all the finer things of life. He took infinite delight too in poking fun at Morin, who truly seems to have been an unusually unattractive fellow, a snob and a spendthrift as well as a knave. He was corroded with conceit and affected an absurd lisp which St Evremond imitated in his verse.[1] St Evremond's objection to Hortense's new hobby was not by any means entirely selfish ; he seems to have been genuinely anxious about her health, and he considered that the perpetual excitement of gambling and the late hours she kept were playing upon her nerves.

Hortense's house in London was always thronged with animals and birds, of which she was passionately fond, a taste which seems to have been characteristic of the Mazarin family. The great Cardinal himself had had an especial fondness for monkeys, and Hortense shared this predilection. She had three dogs, " Boy," " Little Rogue," and " Chop," and she also supported a number of cats, no doubt at some peril to her extensive aviary which contained, besides the famous white sparrow,

[1] St Evremond, *Œuvres*, 1739, IV, 160, etc.

a nightingale, a bullfinch, a parakeet, a goldfinch, a linnet, a canary called Filis, and a starling called Jacob.[1] Nothing pleased her more than the gift of some uncommon bird, and her friends, when travelling abroad, were asked to look out for possible additions to her aviary. This duty also fell upon St Evremond, who once wrote to her about a sparrow he had seen. "I was told of a sparrow, the King of all sparrows; they say it whistles, is tamer than any that was ever seen, and that it plays a thousand pretty tricks, which sparrows are not wont to do. This great merit gave me a curiosity to see it. I found in it all that had been said of it, except that rare quality of whistling, which was put off to another time, when it would be in better humour. The lowest farthing was eight shillings: too little for a nightingale-sparrow; too much for a common sparrow, let it be ever so tame."[2] Unfortunately he does not record whether the bird obliged with a song on his second visit, or whether in consequence it was added to Hortense's collection.

When Hortense was absent from home St Evremond would be commissioned to visit her house and make sure that all was well with her menagerie. This duty he performed most

[1] St Evremond *Œuvres*, 1739, V, 101.

[2] St Evremond, *Works*, 1728, III, 430; *Œuvres*, 1739, V, 178.

punctiliously and wrote Hortense full and detailed reports. "My first visit is always made to Pretty,[1] my second to the chickens, which are the worthiest chickens I have seen in my life. They favour an old cock covered with scars, an old wounded soldier, who could well demand a place among the pensioners at Newmarket. They prefer him to a young gallant, who has the finest comb and the finest tail imaginable. I must fain be content with my condition, such as it is, but if I could choose, I would rather be an old cock among these virtuous hens, than an old man among the Ladies."[2]

Hortense always welcomed an opportunity to go to Newmarket when the Court was there, for she was a magnificent horsewoman, and would rise at daybreak and ride for miles over the downs.[3]

Whether she had money or not Hortense's extravagance was amazing. She kept open house, and her table was always thronged with visitors who were regaled with truly royal fare. Her cook, Galet, was famed for the sumptuousness of the repasts he offered to her guests. Hortense would even send to Paris for choice delicacies unobtainable in England, and St Evremond was always indefatigable in procuring the best wines

[1] The parrot.
[2] St Evremond, *Œuvres*, 1739, IV, 176.
[3] *Ibid*, IV, 169.

for her through his friends Gonville and Ninon de Lenclos. He would also endeavour to repay her in some measure for her lavish hospitality to him by sending her gifts of flowers and fruit, accompanied of course by one of the charming notes at which he excelled.

"As all the world gives you Fruit, I will not be the only person who gives you none. Receive Peaches from a man who has no Garden, with as good a heart as he gives you them. I ought not to have made use of the word Heart: that word ought no more to come out of the mouth of a man at my Age, than that of Health. But without Heart, and without Health, I am hasta la muerte."[1]

The Duchesse Mazarin at this time maintained a fairly considerable household. Besides her ordinary domestics there were three waiting-women, two of whom, Fanchon and Grenier, were French, the other, Isabel, Spanish. She also had two English pages, Dery and Stourton. As a pendant to Mustapha, the little Moor given her by the Duke of Savoy, she obtained a small negro whom she named Pompey.

Much of her ready money disappeared at the gambling table. The stakes at her house seem to have been very high. Hortense once won £5,000 from Nell Gwyn in a single evening, but she was not always so lucky and there can be no doubt

[1] St Evremond, *Works*, 1728, III, 44.

that her gambling propensities were largely responsible for the fact that she rarely had any money. What she had she spent lavishly. She was an enthusiastic collector of curiosities and was wont to go down to the docks herself to inspect the vessels arriving from the East and to purchase the rarest and richest objects in their cargoes.[1] On the adornment of her person she spent enormous sums. She had always been considered the best-dressed of the Mancini sisters, all of whom were famed at the Court of Louis XIV for their exquisite taste in dress, with the exception of Madame de Bouillon, of whom it was said that no woman ever troubled herself less about dress.[2] The Treasury Books abound with entries relating to goods Hortense sent for from abroad—almost invariably clothes or other aids to the further embellishment of her beauty.[3] She procured lace from Venice and Flanders, horn combs from Italy, and from abroad too came gloves, fans, gilt leather buttons, and "ameletts of Roman essences." One particularly interesting entry relates to "two cases lately come from France, containing a black flowered satin gown trimmed with embroidered lace, a manteau gown flowered with gold and silver, five satin petticoats

[1] St Evremond, *Œuvres*, 1739. IV, 164.

[2] Rénée, *Les Nièces de Mazarin*, 358.

[3] *Treasury Books*, 1676-1679, 1685, etc.

embroidered, 13 yards of ribbon mixed with gold and silver, 6½ yards of silk ribbon, three muffs, a box of essences, four pairs of trimmed gloves, two pairs of plain gloves and one pair of shoes."[1]

The passing of time seemed to leave the Duchesse Mazarin's beauty unscathed. In 1683 her own nephew, the Chevalier de Soissons, son of her sister Olympe, when on a visit to England fell so passionately in love with her that on her account he fought a duel with another of her youthful admirers, Baron Banér,[2] son of the famous Swedish general. Unfortunately he took the matter so seriously that he slew the ill-starred Baron.[3] "One would not have thought that the eyes of a grandmother could have done such execution," was Madame de Sévigné's comment on the affair.[4] Hortense indulged in the most extraordinary display of grief on this occasion, not only, it appears, because she had lost a favoured lover, but also because her nephew was prosecuted and punished for his offence against the duelling-edicts, and there at one time seemed a likelihood that he would be deprived of all his benefices. She caused her apartments to be hung entirely with black and would scarcely consent to receive her most

[1] *Treasury Book*, 1676-79, p. 501 (Jan., 1677).
[2] The name is variously spelt: Banér, Banner, and Banier.
[3] Des Maizeaux, *Life of St E*, civ, et seq.
[4] *Lettres de Madame de Sévigné*, VII, 323.

intimate friends. She even talked of retiring into the Spanish convent where her sister Marie had recently sought refuge after the vicissitudes of her eventful career. A rumour of her intention reached her husband, who was at once exalted with religious fervour, and thought the idea so excellent that he sent Madame de Ruz with a party of devout young ladies over to England to exhort Hortense to persist in this noble design. St Evremond, who had at first addressed a poem to her lauding her repentance, now grew alarmed when he perceived that she really meant what she said, and advanced all the arguments possible on the other side—in prose actually, which shows how seriously he was perturbed. "When ugly and stupid women throw themselves into a convent," he wrote to her, "it is divine inspiration which makes them leave the world, where they appear only to put their creator to shame; in your case, Madame, it is truly a temptation of the devil, who envious of God's glory cannot bear the admiration which his finest work gives us."[1] He represented to her in addition that she obviously had no vocation and that, though she was doubtless eager to see her sister, three or four days would suffice them to exchange reminiscences and thereafter she would begin to find the confinement of a convent irksome to her.

[1] St Evremond, *Œuvres*, 1739, IV, 156.

Moreover, he professed himself unable to see why Hortense should grieve so inordinately over the death of a lover. After all, lovers were as mortal as other men. "To lament a dead man," he told her, "is not to lament a lover. Your lover is now no more than a sad and empty object formed by your imagination: 'tis to be in love with your own idea."[1] He knew no one, he said, who was more philosophically inclined than Hortense in times of prosperity; but when the slightest trouble arose, she would at once lose all her reason, all her common sense, and resign herself to those who had none or whose interest lay in her ruin.[2] This was a palpable hit at Madame de Ruz, who seems to have done all in her power to keep Hortense melancholy and depressed and to prevent her regaining enough of her usual spirits to cause her to abandon the absurd notion of retiring into a convent. Mazarin's emissary haunted the house like a mournful jackdaw. St Evremond christened her La Doloride, because of the cloak of impenetrable gloom with which she enshrouded herself and all around her.

Whether it was because her innate worldliness gradually reasserted itself, or because the excellent arguments of her philosopher ultimately brought

[1] St Evremond, *Works*, 1728, II, 295.
[2] St Evremond, *Œuvres*, 1739, IV, 217.

conviction to her, or simply because the mere fact that her husband approved of her project was enough to disgust her with it, at all events she abandoned the idea of becoming a nun and threw herself once more with renewed zest into all the diversions that offered themselves.

Evelyn gives a curious glimpse of her enjoying herself at Whitehall about a week before the death of Charles II. The King had always remained a good friend to her, as, indeed, he did to all those whom he had once favoured with his attentions; but Evelyn evidently thought that she was still his mistress, unless the elegant term which he applies to the three ladies is intended to be used comprehensively to include past as well as present holders of that exalted position. In February, 1685, a few days after the King's death, he wrote: "I can never forget the inexpressible luxury and prophanesse, gaming and all dissolutenesse, and as it were total forgetfulnesse of God (it being Sunday evening) which this day se'nnight I was witnesse of, the King sitting and toying with his concubines, Portsmouth, Cleaveland, and Mazarine, etc., a French boy singing love songs, in that glorious gallery, while about twenty of the greate courtiers and other dissolute persons were at Basset round a large table, a bank of at least 2,000 in gold before them, upon which two gentlemen who were with me made reflexions

with astonishment. Six days after was all in the dust ! "[1]

All may have been in the dust, but there were some who wept for Charles II, and not the least sincere in her sorrow was Hortense Mancini, Duchesse Mazarin.

[1] *Evelyn's Diary* (1819 ed.), I, 585.

CHAPTER XII

James II continues Hortense's pension—She refuses to return to France—The Duchesse de Bouillon's visit —La Fontaine's poem on Hortense—The Abbé de Chaulieu—The Revolution—Mazarin tries to secure his wife's return—Hortense's debts—St Evremond's advice to her—Mazarin appeals to the Council of State—The pleadings of Erard—No reflection made on Hortense's virtue—Decision of the Council—Hortense decides to stay in England—William III grants her a pension—Tales of her poverty—Hortense in Kensington and Chelsea—Her lasting beauty—Her bad temper —Her addiction to drink—Devotion of St Evremond—Her last illness—Her death—Her son arrives too late —Letters of St Evremond and Ninon de Lenclos—Grief of St Evremond—Mazarin obtains possession of Hortense's body—He takes it on his travels—Hortense finds rest at last.

When Charles II died it was generally thought that the Duchesse Mazarin would quit England and return to France. But somehow the prospect did not seem to appeal to her. Since her husband had succeeded in persuading Louis XIV to allow him to cease paying her allowance she would have been obliged to throw herself entirely on his mercy, and this she did not feel disposed to do. In England, although her debts were considerable, she could at least rely upon a certain amount of ready money for her immediate needs, as James II graciously continued the pension granted to her

by his brother. Moreover, in England she was surrounded by friends, whereas her enemies at the French Court were many. Accordingly she rejected all suggestions that she should return to France.

In spite of her refusal to leave England, she did not entirely lose sight of her family. Olympe, who, exiled as the result of her suspected complicity in the notorious poisoning cases that had recently agitated France, had set out on a course of wanderings all over Europe, from Spain to the Low Countries, from the Low Countries to Germany, seems to have visited her on one occasion, while in July, 1687, Marianne, the Duchesse de Bouillon, who had also recently got into trouble at the Court of France, and so thought that a change of surroundings for a time might prove beneficial both to her health and her reputation, arrived in England on an extended visit to the Duchesse Mazarin.

Marianne was an intimate friend of the poet La Fontaine, and the two ladies, with the able secretarial assistance of St Evremond, now attempted to persuade him to come over to England, assuring him of a welcome worthy of his fame and talents. Although the prospect admittedly attracted him, he was now growing old and his health was failing him, so that he felt he was not strong enough to undertake the long

and arduous journey. He contented himself, therefore, with sending St Evremond a poem in which he gracefully lauded the charm and beauty of the Duchesse Mazarin and the poetical gifts of her self-constituted laureate.

Hortense eut du ciel en partage
La grâce, la beauté, l'esprit ; ce n'est pas tout :
Les qualités du coeur ; ce n'est pas tout encore :
Pour mille autres appas le monde entier l'adore
Depuis l'un jusqu'à l'autre bout.
L'Angleterre en ce point la dispute à la France ;
Votre héroïne rend nos deux peuples rivaux.
O vous, le chef de ces dévots,
De ces dévots à toute outrance,
Faites-nous l'éloge d'Hortense !
Je pourrois en charger le dieu du double mont,
Mais j'aime mieux Saint-Evremond.[1]

But though La Fontaine was ready to pay tribute to the beauty of Hortense, Marianne was always the foremost star in his firmament. Indeed, he suggested to St Evremond that they two

[1] St Evremond, *Œuvres*, 1739, IV, 455. In Des Maizeaux' English edition, 1728 (II, 397) is a translation of La Fontaine's poem.

To Bright Hortensia, Fate's indulgent care
Has given a free, but winning Air:
The force of Wit, and blooming Beauty's pride,
With thousand nameless Charms beside:
Where'er the busy sun enlightens day,
Hortensia's eyes have sov'reign sway.

Oh Evremond! chief leader of the train,
That fair Hortensia's crown maintain,
In lasting Numbers, and harmonious Lays
Begin to celebrate her praise.
Why should I Phœbus, or the Muses name?
You'll do more justice to her fame.

elderly champions ought to sally forth into the lists and joust to decide which was the fairer of their ladies.[1]

Such an exchange of flowery compliments in prose and verse was a pursuit after St Evremond's heart. He kept up a like correspondence in the names of the Duchesse and himself with other distinguished persons in France, including the Abbé de Chaulieu, another friend and admirer of the Duchesse de Bouillon. Chaulieu used to send Hortense copies of his verses accompanied by an epistle also in verse, and St Evremond would respond for her with equal grace in the same medium. Sometimes Hortense herself would add a pertinent postscript in her own hand, as when she informed Chaulieu that she considered St Evremond's comparison of her with Sappho to be for several reasons most inappropriate.[2]

The Duchesse de Bouillon was still in England when the Revolution occurred and James II was driven from his throne. This was a far more serious matter for Hortense than had been the death of Charles II, since it meant not only the complete stoppage of supplies, but also considerable insecurity in her personal position. Her faith and her relationship with the exiled Queen

[1] St Evremond, *Œuvres*, 1739, V, 456.

[2] *Œuvres diverses de Monsieur l'Abbé de Chaulieu*, 1740, Tom I, 96-102.

combined to render her suspect to the Protestant party, and efforts were actually made to obtain her banishment.

To Mazarin the time now seemed propitious to make another determined attempt to force her to come back to him. He summoned her to return to France, intimating that she could now have no further reason for wishing to remain in England. While her kinswoman the Queen was still upon the throne he had felt, so he said, that he could scarcely object to her remaining at her side, but now that the true sovereigns were in exile and the Crown of England was on the head of a foreign and Protestant usurper she could have no excuse for refusing to return to France. He reinforced his commands with arguments that were as ingenuous as they were entertaining. He protested that his own marked fervour for the Catholic religion had caused him to view with equanimity her resolution to remain in England while James II was endeavouring to convert the country to the true faith, even though he took leave to doubt whether his wife's mode of living was genuinely calculated to increase the reputation of the Catholics for saintliness. But now he considered that her very soul was in peril, and he would not brook her remaining any longer in this Protestant sink of perdition and consorting with such low and dangerous company as " milords

and episcopalians." His ignorance of any tongue but his own had apparently led him to believe that the word " milord " was one of the strongest terms of abuse in the English language.

Mazarin's plea to his wife to return to him may or may not have been sincere—the Duchesse herself was convinced that it was not—but at any rate it met with no better success than his former attempts. Hortense replied to him that she was profoundly in debt and that her creditors would not suffer her to leave without payment. Should the Duc feel disposed to settle her debts for her, then she might begin to consider the advisability of returning to France. There can be no doubt that this plea of debts was perfectly genuine. No money was coming to her from France, and she was no longer receiving her English pension. In fact, she was now living on what she could borrow from her friends and acquaintances. In her letters to her friends in France Hortense steadfastly maintained that her financial difficulties constituted her only reason for not returning to France, though in a letter written to the Duchesse de Bouillon for her by St Evremond she was a little more candid. She informed her that nothing but the want of means hindered her from going to spend the rest of her days with those persons whom she loved above all the rest of the world. " These are my true and real intentions ;

I don't disguise them in the least." But she goes on to say that she will neither return to her husband nor enter a convent on any conditions, and then comes the real point of the letter: "You will make such use of my letter as you shall think will be most for my advantage."

It is, however, quite clear that she never really had any intention whatsoever of returning to France and would have been quite prepared to state so openly, had not Saint-Evremond prevented her in the following letter.

"I hope you will be so good as to excuse me, Madam, if I do not perfectly give into the generous frankness of your sentiments, which is opposite to the natural circumspection of my countrymen, who are enemies to truths that are clear and boldly declared. My reasons against a full declaration of your intentions are these:

"I am persuaded that all your acquaintance (for your friends have not yet shown themselves) desire nothing more than to have a pretence to cry out against your humour and your conduct, tho the one be very agreeable, and the other very blameless. Never give them any handle to wreak themselves upon you: tie them down, whether they will or no, at least to a decent shew of friendship which they ought to have for you with more warmth than they have. Always ask money;

and if none comes, 'tis you who will have cause to complain : if you can get it, I engage to furnish you with ten or twelve reasons for not leaving England, each of which will be better than another. In fine give nobody any cause or pretext for abandoning you, and be convinced that a too open declaration of your intentions would be very prejudicial to you there, and would not be of any use to you here. I have heard you say, Madam, that the Countess of Soissons never gave people an opportunity of finding out her secrets : don't discover your sentiments yourself. If you are resolved to proceed with less precaution, the Normand[1] quits his, and is ready to enter into your sentiments."[2]

On receiving her refusal the Duc at once appealed to the Council of State to deprive her of all her rights under the marriage-settlement unless she should consent to return within a specified time. Hortense was convinced that this had been his intention all along and that his real object was to gain absolute possession of the Mazarin fortune. His appeal to her was, she thought, merely a feint. Knowing that she would inevitably refuse, he had made this gesture in order to strengthen his own position by being able to show that he had tried all other means before resorting to this. Probably

[1] Himself. His family came from Normandy.

[2] St Evremond, *Works*, 1728, II, 419.

she was doing him an injustice in her estimate of his motives. He had never lost his affection for her, even though his manner of showing it had always seemed so perverse. There is no reason to think he was lying when he wrote in September, 1689, that he was bringing the action before the Council of State solely in her interests "as the greatest proof I could give her of an enduring affection for her, so that she may be cured of a sort of spiritual gangrene of which she herself is not conscious, but which the wise men of this world adjudge mortal." This was just another instance of the curiously sadistical element in his nature. He had always loved her, and he had always wanted to hurt her. It is small wonder that Hortense found many to sympathize with her in her unwillingness to accept the kind of love he had to offer her.

"It would be difficult to express the whole extravagancy of this man," wrote Madame de Sévigné at this very time, "he is a madman; he dresses like a beggar; piety runs riot in his brain. We tried to persuade him to withdraw his wife from England where she runs the risk of being expelled and perhaps perverted, and where she is among the King's enemies. But he always insists that she must return to him. To him, Good God! Let us admit, with St Evremond, that she is excepted from ordinary rules, and one recognizes

that she is justified when one sees Monsieur de Mazarin."[1]

A singular line was taken by the Duc's advocate, Erard, in conducting the case before the Council of State.[2] He maintained that from the very beginning the Duchesse's quarrels with her husband had been instigated and fostered by her brother, the Duc de Nevers, who, so he insinuated, had always been possessed of an unremitting enmity towards Mazarin because of his chagrin at not having been left the Cardinal's sole heir himself. Mademoiselle de Montpensier also mentions that Nevers was disappointed at not being made his uncle's heir, though he ought, she says, to have been fully satisfied with what actually was left to him.[3] There is no reason to suppose that he was not more than satisfied. He had known long before the Cardinal's death that he was not to be his heir and had accepted the situation with equanimity, even with relief. His supremely indolent nature would have made him unwilling to assume the responsibility of administering the vast Mazarin fortune. His sentiments towards his eccentric brother-in-law were composed less of

[1] *Lettres de Madame de Sévigné*, IX, 159. Letter to Madame de Grignan, August 12th, 1689.

[2] The pleadings in this suit are to be found in *The Arguments of Monsieur Herard for Monsieur the Duke of Mazarin, and the Factum for Madam the Duchess of Mazarin, etc.*, 1699.

[3] *Mémoires de Mademoiselle de Montpensier*, VIII, 55.

envy than of an amused contempt. He considered Armand Mazarin eminently ridiculous and a heaven-sent butt for the entertaining satirical verses which he could turn out with such facility and grace.

Reviewing the history of the past thirty years Erard professed to find the hand of Nevers in all things. He it was who had persuaded Hortense to begin the action for separation of goods, which was undertaken, not with any hope of success, but simply as a means of getting her out of her husband's house. When the compromise was effected whereby she was to live in separate apartments in the Palais Mazarin, she was, so Erard avers, continuously under the evil influence of her brother. At his suggestion she had caused a communicating door to be made between her apartments and the Hôtel de Nevers through which she would go out at all hours of the day and night, and through which she ultimately withdrew not only herself, but also a considerable quantity of plate and jewels, which did not belong to her alone, but formed the joint property of herself and her husband. This story does not tally with that given by the Duchesse in her memoirs, where she states that the door was walled up by her husband during her first absence from his house. Moreover, she declares that the door was not made by her order, but was already in existence in the

Cardinal's time, which is very likely true, since the Hôtel de Nevers had originally been part of the Palais Mazarin and had only received its new name when it was bequeathed to Philippe on the Cardinal's death.

In regard to the Duchesse's plea that her debts prevented her leaving England, Erard was disposed to regard it as frivolous and in all probability made because she knew that Mazarin would never be able to raise the money to settle them. He was convinced, in addition, that she had plenty of money. According to him Mazarin had sent over large sums to her during the first years of her stay in England, and had only ceased doing so when Charles II began to pay her a pension, which, since he owed money to the late Cardinal, should properly be regarded as emanating from the Mazarin estate and therefore from the Duc himself. He was inclined to consider that the alleged debts were in reality non-existent and had arisen in the fertile brains of the Duc and Duchesse de Nevers. The Duchesse Mazarin had vouchsafed no details of the separate amounts, but had simply demanded a lump sum of 100,000 livres. This looked suspicious. But supposing that the Duchesse had not lied and that she really did owe all that money? Why, then the matter was just as simple, for as a married woman she had had no right to contract them and those who had lent

her money had done so at their own risk. Indeed, as they were all heretics, it could not be wrong for a good Catholic to repudiate obligations contracted with such people.

Passing on to her contention that she could not return to France because all the ports were closed after the Revolution, he refused to believe that the Duchesse could not have left had she so desired. It was notorious that the English Parliament had endeavoured to procure her banishment, and he was sure that every assistance to leave the country would have been most eagerly extended to her. Here he was quite right. If Hortense had chosen to leave her debts behind her and quit the country she could have done so easily enough, especially as William III had put a yacht at the disposal of the Duchesse de Bouillon for her voyage back to France.

Mazarin had apparently himself given his counsel instructions to cast no reflections on his wife's virtue. Considering Hortense's notorious laxity in this respect this shows an almost incredible forbearance on his part. Erard could not refrain from pointing out that he was making his own case much weaker by taking this magnanimous view of her conduct. However, he had been instructed that matters of that kind were not to be gone into at all, his client being perfectly willing to take it for granted that she was innocent in every case.

Because he wished to believe her chaste, the Duc, said Erard, did not accuse his wife of immorality. On the whole Erard kept to his instructions in this particular. He made no direct accusations, but as a good advocate he could not forbear from occasionally adding point to an argument with a neat insinuation.

Referring to the Duchesse's causes of complaint against her husband, Erard said that she accused him of three faults in particular, extravagance, jealousy, and excessive devotion. His reply to the first of those accusations was that the Duc's fortune was still intact, including movable property. The Duchesse's counsel, Sachot, could not here have been expected to miss the opportunity of drawing his learned friend's attention to the fact that the famous statues could hardly be considered any longer intact. Erard asked him whether he wished to intimate that it was solely because of the mutilation of the statues that the Duchesse had left her husband and refused to return. It did not seem to strike him that his plea regarding the intact condition of the Mazarin fortune entirely discounted his former statement that the Duc could not raise the money to pay off the Duchesse's debts.

As for the other two faults, Mazarin was willing to admit that he might formerly have been somewhat to blame, but he was now willing to meet

his wife half-way. A certain amount of jealousy in a husband was surely desirable, but in future the Duc would endeavour to control his and would moreover engage to make no further attempts to exercise any control over his wife's behaviour, however outrageous it might become. And if the Duchesse would only consent to return she would find that her husband's devotion had mellowed with the passage of time. He was willing to admit that in the old days it might have contained " quelque chose de farouche et de trop austère."

Sincere as Mazarin's professions may have been, he had made promises of a like nature before and had never kept them, so that it is scarcely surprising that the Duchesse showed herself reluctant to put any great faith in them now.

Erard's pleading for the Duc was extremely eloquent. St Evremond himself had to admit that, although in his opinion his arguments were fundamentally unsound, the wit and capability with which they were presented had, in spite of himself, drawn forth the admiration of the artist within him.[1] Having put the case before the Court, Erard asked that the Council should command the Duchesse Mazarin to return to her husband within a reasonable time to be determined by themselves, and, if she failed to do so, should

[1] St Evremond, *Œuvres*, 1739, V, 203. Letter to the Marquis de Saissac.

declare all her rights under the marriage-settlements to be forfeited. The case dragged on for some time. Six audiences in all were held, but in spite of the able pleadings of the Duchesse's counsel, Sachot, instructed to a certain extent by St Evremond, who had written the Duchesse's "Factum"[1] for her, the Council finally decided in favour of the husband. The decision was not unexpected, for from a legal point of view the Duchesse's case was by no means strong. The Court decreed that the Duchesse should hand in a detailed list of her debts within one month, in order that the matter might be gone into. Within three months she was to return to France and repair to the Convent of Chaillot, and she was to return to her husband's house six months later. If she failed to obey, all her rights in the Mazarin property were to be declared forfeit.[2]

Hortense had by now decided that life in England under any conditions would be infinitely preferable to life in France with Mazarin, and she resolved to disregard the Council's decree altogether. Her position in England had lately improved; with the help of her many influential friends she had not only succeeded in avoiding expulsion, but also had actually obtained a pension of £2,000 from William III. This pension

[1] A Factum was a written answer to be read by the Court.

[2] *Pleadings, etc.*, 1691, p. 123.

which, probably for reasons of State, was granted to her in the name of the Duke of Devonshire, was a great help to her, though it did not suffice to keep her out of debt.[1] In proportion as her resources decreased her extravagance increased. Her creditors were many, and there were times when only the representations of very powerful persons kept her from being thrown into a debtor's prison by some of the less amenable amongst them.[2] The most extraordinary tales, some of them no doubt considerably exaggerated, if not altogether apocryphal, are told of the precarious manner of her living at this time. She still gave banquets, but her table was almost entirely furnished with gifts from her friends. The ever-faithful St Evremond, it appears, supplied the butter. There may be an element of truth in this account of the way in which her larder was replenished, but it is difficult to credit the story that guests at her house would often slip money under their plates to pay for their entertainment.[3] Her extravagance never waned, and the only economy of hers recorded is her persistent omission to pay her rates.[4]

St James's now knew her no more. In 1692 she removed to Kensington, where she occupied

[1] *Treasury Papers*, LV, 82 (August, 1698).
[2] St Evremond, *Œuvres*, 1739, V, 80.
[3] Lysons, *Environs*, II, 90.
[4] *Ibid* II, 89.

one of the new houses in Kensington Square, which was then in course of construction. About two years later she transferred herself to Chelsea, some say to Lindsay House, but others, with more likelihood, to a small house belonging to Lord Cheyne in Paradise Row.

To the very end of her life she preserved her beauty, a fact of which she was always fully aware. It was during one of these last years that she wrote proudly to St Evremond: "Never have I felt better, never have I been more beautiful."[1] And it was in 1699, just before her death, that Ninon de Lenclos wrote from Paris:—"Everybody that comes from England speaks of the Duchess of Mazarin's beauty, as they talk here of that of Mademoiselle de Bellefonds which is now in the bud."[2] The youthful beauty of whom Ninon wrote was Hortense's granddaughter, a child of her daughter Marie Olympe, who had married the Marquis de Bellefonds.

The seeming everlastingness of Hortense's beauty was partly due to the careful measures she adopted to preserve it. She was wont to subject herself to a most stringent diet, which, like most diets, also had the effect of souring her temper. St Evremond was charitable enough to ascribe

[1] St Evremond, *Œuvres*, 1739, V, 242.

[2] *Correspondance de Ninon de Lenclos*, p. 130; St Evremond, *Works*, 1728, III, 65.

HORTENSE MANCINI, DUCHESSE MAZARIN

Penelope Cleyn. Talbot Hughes Collection

[*face p. 264*

the deterioration in her temper to the misfortunes through which she had passed, and in spite of her peevishness he never relaxed his devoted attentions to her. There were times when nothing he did seemed right in her eyes, and yet he cared for her so profoundly that he would put up with it all, though not wholly without complaints to his friends and supplications to Providence.

Seigneur, Seigneur, donne moi patience,
Qu'on a de mal a servir Dame Hortence.
Mais si je m'éloignois de ses divins appas
Que faire ! comment vivre, en ne la voyant pas.[1]

Another cause which may well have contributed to her bad tempers was her rather too liberal indulgence in wines and spirits. St Evremond had frequent occasion to reprimand her gently in tactful verse for her excessive fondness for drink, and informed her that if she drank less she might well live to be a hundred. According to him her health was being undermined by her too generous potations of white wine, anis, absinthe, and whisky, which last barbarian liquid was sent to her from Ireland by her friend, Lord Galway.[2] Evelyn also records that her health of late years was much impaired by "intemperate drinking of strong waters."[3]

1 St Evremond, *Œuvres*, 1739, V, 29.
2 St Evremond, *Œuvres*, 1739, V, 157, 261 etc.
3 *Evelyn's Diary*, July the 11th, 1699.

In the early summer of 1699 Hortense fell seriously ill and it soon became clear that she had not long to live, though, as often happens, she regained a kind of factitious strength for a few days before the end and raised in her friends false hopes that she would recover.[1]

On hearing that Hortense's illness was likely to prove mortal her son, the Duc de la Meilleraye, had set out with the Duchesse de Bouillon to come to her, but they had little or no hope of arriving in time, for the Duchesse was sinking rapidly and for some days had only been kept alive by brandy.[2] When they reached Dover they were greeted with the news that the Duchesse Mazarin had died at eight o'clock in the morning on July the 2nd. They decided not to disembark, but to return forthwith to France to carry the news to Mazarin.[3]

It was reported in the Dutch gazettes at the time that all the Duchesse Mazarin's property and even her body were seized by her creditors immediately upon her death.[4] No doubt it is true that the bailiffs entered the house of death with as much speed and alacrity as the undertakers, but it is surely incredible that they

[1] Bath *MSS.* Letters from Lord Jersey to Mathew Prior, June, 1699.

[2] Letter from the Abbé Viguier, quoted by Perey (*Marie Mancini Colonna*, 448).

[3] *Dangeau's Journal*, VII, 104 and 108.

[4] *Mémoires de St Simon*, VI, 237, note.

should actually have had the indecency to distrain upon the corpse, especially as the winding-up of the Duchesse's estate was in the hands of men of such rank and influence as Lord Montagu and Lord Feversham.

On her death-bed the last rites of the Church had been administered to Hortense by her faithful Chaplain, Milon. St Evremond too remained with her to the end and did all he could to comfort her in her last moments. He was convinced that Hortense's comparatively early death was partly the result of the reckless way in which she had used up her vitality. She had tried to carry the spirit of youth over into middle age, and had refused to take life any less quickly than she had done when she was a girl of twenty. Had she accepted the changes that Time inevitably brought she might have lived longer. So at least thought Ninon de Lenclos, when she wrote to St Evremond: "Would to God the Duchess of Mazarin had been of our mind, for then she would have been alive still, but she would needs die the greatest Beauty in the world."[1]

Ninon had been one of the first to write to the inconsolable St Evremond after Hortense's death.

"How great a loss have you sustained, Sir! If we were not to be lost ourselves; it is impossible we should ever be comforted. I heartily condole

[1] St Evremond, *Works*, 1728, III, 65.

with you; you have lost an amiable commerce, that supported you in a foreign country. What can be done to retrieve such a misfortune? They who live long are liable to see their friends die. After this, your parts, your Philosophy will serve to support you. I am as much touched with this death as if I had had the honour of the Duchess of Mazarin's acquaintance. She thought of me in my sufferings: I was touched with that goodness; and her being so dear to you, made me love and esteem her. There is no remedy for this misfortune; nor is there against that which happens to our poor bodies. Take care of yours."[1]

St Evremond behaved like a sorrowing widower, and truly he does seem to have been broken-hearted. All the little enjoyments of life were spoilt for him now that he no longer had Hortense to share them with him. He told Lord Montagu that the thought that he used to eat truffles with her made him burst into tears at the very mention of them.[2]

As appears from certain letters from St Evremond to the Marquis de Canaples, Hortense had borrowed eight hundred pounds from him and had paid back only half the sum at the time of her death.[3] St Evremond had no hopes of being

[1] St Evremond, *Works*, 1728, III, 61.
[2] St Evremond, *Œuvres*, 1739, V, 346.
[3] *Ibid*, V, 336 and 342.

reimbursed by the Duc, and so sought consolation in philosophizing over the loss of money which he could ill spare. " When I reflect that the niece and heiress of Cardinal Mazarin had need of me on certain occasions for her subsistence, I make Christian reflexions, which will be for the good of my soul, if they are of no effect towards my payment." In another letter he speaks her epitaph appropriately :—" She was the most beautiful woman in the world, my friend, and her beauty retained its brilliancy to the last minute of her life. She was the greatest heiress in Europe ; through ill fortune she was reduced to penury, but, magnificent in her poverty, she lived more honourably than the richest could have done. She died seriously with a Christian indifference for life."

Meanwhile the lawful widower had shown intense eagerness to gain possession of the dead body of the woman he had never been able to hold while she was alive. On the 13th of August, 1699, the coffin containing her remains was brought to France and handed over to him. The acquisition had the most curious effect on his warped mentality : he solemnly set out upon a grim and gloomy repetition of the very travels his young bride had hated so bitterly. For nearly a year he carried the coffin about with him wherever he went. As in the early days of her marriage Hortense was carried from Maine to Nevers, from Alsace to

Brittany. At length the Duc was persuaded to give the body a temporary resting-place in the church of Notre Dame de Liesse, where the superstitious folk treated it like the relics of a saint and touched it with their rosaries. Here for a time the body of Hortense remained, receiving veneration of a kind very different from that which it had received when the life-blood was in it, until eventually it was decided to give it final interment in the tomb of the great Cardinal in the church of the Collège des Quatre Nations in Paris.[1] Here the Vagabond Duchess at last found rest, a condition which may have been more congenial to her in death than it had been in life.

[1] *Mèmoires de St Simon*, VI, 237-8, and XXIII, 207.

APPENDIX I

Four children, three daughters and a son, were born to the Duchesse Mazarin and her husband. Marie Charlotte was born in 1662, Marie Anne in 1663, Marie Olympe in 1665, and Paul Jules in 1667. The first to marry was Marie Olympe, whose wedding to the Marquis de Bellefonds took place in September, 1681. Marie Charlotte had the most romantic career of the three girls. The Marquis de Richelieu fell in love with her and asked her hand in marriage. But her father viewed the match with disapproval for reasons of a most singular and grotesque nature which can scarcely be repeated, and caused her to be shut up in the convent of Chaillot, while he proceeded to consult eminent and learned ecclesiastics in Grenoble, La Trappe, and Angers as to whether he could in conscience allow the marriage. The young lovers, however, were too impatient to await the result of his deliberations, and one day Marie Charlotte climbed over the convent-wall and eloped with Richelieu. This runaway match caused a great sensation, but once the marriage was an accomplished fact most of the relations on both sides gave in and accepted the situation. Not so Mazarin himself, who continued to persecute

the young lovers with threats of prosecution. It was not till two years after the marriage that he at last extended his forgiveness to them. Then he did at least behave quite handsomely. With the sole condition that there should be a re-marriage, since he regarded the former union as irregular, he gave his son-in-law the government of La Fère and his daughter a marriage portion of 100,000 francs. Louis XIV was also induced to grant the Marquis de Richelieu a free pardon, the first he had ever granted for the crime of abduction. He made an exception on this occasion, so he said, only in consideration of the great services rendered to France by the two illustrious Cardinals whose names were borne by the offenders. Marie Charlotte died in 1729.

The second daughter, Marie Anne, took the veil. She became Abbesse de Lys in 1698 and died in 1720.

Hortense's only son, Paul Jules, Duc de la Meilleraye, married in 1685 Félice Charlotte Armande de Durfort, daughter of the Maréchal de Duras. He succeeded his father as Duc Mazarin in 1713 and died in 1731. With the death of his successor and only son, Gui Paul Jules, in 1738, the dukedom of Mazarin became extinct. His daughter, Armande Félicité, who married Louis de Mailly, Marquis de Nesle, was the mother of five daughters, four of whom showed that they

had inherited the Mancini disposition for gallantry by becoming each in turn mistress to Louis XV. These were the Comtesse de Mailly, the Duchesse de Vintimille, the Duchesse de Lauraguais, and the Marquise de la Tournelle, afterwards Duchesse de Châteauroux. Curiously enough it was the sister who bore the Duchesse Mazarin's name who was the only one of them all not to enjoy the royal favours. It is true that her husband, the Marquis de Flavacourt, fearing that she might be disposed to follow the example of her sisters, informed her that there were no lengths to which he would not go to preserve his honour. Considering all the circumstances he can scarcely be blamed for entertaining such fears, but he need not have perturbed himself, for Hortense Félicité, though fair enough to win all hearts if she had chosen, was a gentle faithful creature who would not have dreamt of breaking her marriage-vows.

APPENDIX II

THE PORTRAITS OF THE DUCHESSE MAZARIN

The task of discovering the present whereabouts of all the portraits of so widely travelled a lady as the Duchesse Mazarin would have been overwhelming, and I have accordingly made no attempt to trace any portraits or miniatures outside this country, although the fame of the Duchesse's beauty makes it certain that there must be many in existence both in France and Italy. Even within the limits I have set myself I have found it exceedingly difficult to obtain much detailed information, and the only consideration that induces me to publish the results of my somewhat disappointing researches is that a similar appendix on the portraits of La Belle Stuart which I included in a former book was the means of bringing a good deal of further information to light.

The best known and probably also the best portrait of the Duchesse Mazarin is that by Mignard in the collection of the Earl of Sandwich at Hinchingbrooke. A repetition of this picture is in the possession of Mr Pither. Another portrait by Mignard was loaned by Mr Musgrave to the National Portrait Exhibition in 1866, and

has been reproduced by Mr Allan Fea in his book, "Some Beauties of the Seventeenth Century."

In the collection of Earl Spencer at Althorp is a picture by Kneller portraying the Duchess in Eastern costume holding a golden bowl in which she is about to dissolve a pearl. According to a manuscript note by Horace Walpole in the Althorp Catalogue this portrait was copied from the original by Carlo Maratti at the Duke of St Albans'. Walpole himself possessed another copy which fetched £21 in the Strawberry Hill sale.

The National Portrait Gallery possesses a small portrait by an unknown artist, and other portraits are in the collections of the Earl of Southesk at Kinnaird Castle, Lord Richard Cavendish at Holker Hall, and Sir Harold Bowden, Bart, at Bestwood.

No success has attended my efforts to trace the portrait of the Duchess by Sir Peter Lely exhibited at Wrexham in 1876. It was then in the possession of "G. Drummond." The Earl of Wharncliffe disclaims any knowledge of a portrait by Lespinière registered at the National Portrait Gallery as having been in the possession of his family in 1879.

Mention must be made of the picture of Vertumnus and Pomona by Caspar Netscher in the Earl of Ellesmere's collection at Bridgwater House, since it has been supposed that it

represents St Evremond and the Duchesse Mazarin. The golden hair and blue eyes of the lady make it certain that this is no portrait of Hortense.

The British Museum has a chalk drawing by Mary Beale after Lely. As will be observed from the list of engravings printed below Lely must have painted Hortense on several occasions.

The miniatures of the Duchess are probably even more numerous than the larger portraits, but I have not been successful in finding many. Mr Talbot Hughes boasts three in his collection, two of which are reproduced in the present work. That by Penelope Cleyn has a special interest in that it portrays Hortense at a somewhat later period in her life than most of the other portraits of her. The third miniature by P. Carandini seems to be an adaptation of Lord Sandwich's portrait. The pose and the costume correspond, but a red curtain has been introduced into the background. A miniature of the Duchess wearing a turban is in the collection of His Majesty the King at Windsor Castle. Of doubtful authenticity is a miniature by Edmund Ashfield formerly in the Francis Wellesley collection and portraying a lady with a spaniel in her arms. A water-colour miniature of the Duchess was formerly in the possession of Horace Walpole and was sold in the Strawberry Hill sale.

The Victoria and Albert Museum has a small enamel by Petitot showing the Duchesse Mazarin in a red dress with the corsage trimmed with lace. A very similar enamel but with an entirely different costume is in the collection of the Duke of Richmond and Gordon at Goodwood. Very doubtful is the second enamel called the Duchesse Mazarin in the Victoria and Albert Museum. Besides that she possesses light brown hair and eyes the lady bears little resemblance to Hortense.

Dr Williamson in his "History of Portrait Miniatures" reproduces a box in the collection of Mr Alfred de Rothschild enamelled by Petitot with portraits of several ladies of the French Court including the Duchesse Mazarin.

Engravings and mezzotints of the Duchesse Mazarin are fairly numerous.[1]

1 *Lely pinxit—P. Lombard sculpsit*, 1669 (Bromley). The Duchess is portrayed at three-quarter length with a pearl necklace and pearls in her hair. According to Bromley this engraving was prefixed to "La Pratique des Vertus Chrétiennes," 1669. Beneath is the following inscription:

Telle est la charmante duchesse
Dont la gloire obscurcit tous les siècles passés
Et que tous les suivants admireront sans cesse,
Sans l'admirer jamais assez.

[1] After the description of each engraving I have noted whether it is mentioned in Bromley's Catalogue of Engraved British Portraits and Grainger's Biographical History of England, and whether a copy is to be found in the Print Room at the British Museum.

2 *Ortance Manchini, Duchesse of Mazarin, etc. P. Lely pinxit—G. Valck sculpsit et excudit,* 1678. (Bromley, Grainger, B.M.)

The Duchess is represented in classical draperies nearly full-length seated. Her left hand rests on an urn.

3 Medallion in mezzotint adapted from No. 2. (B.M.)

There are slight differences in the drapery and jewelled fastenings have been added.

4. *Hortence Mancini, duchesse Mazarin. P. Lely p —Coster sculps.*

This is a medallion of No. 2 in reverse.

5 *Hortens Mancini, Duchesse Mazarin.*

An ill-executed copy of No. 4.

6 *The Dutchess of Massarine. P. Lelij pinxit—R. Tompson excudit.* (Bromley, B.M.). Mezzotint.

The Duchess holds a garland of flowers in her right hand.

7 *Ortense Mancini duchesse de Masarin etc. Ex formis Nicolai Vesscher cum privil. ordin. general. Belgii federati. P. Stephani sculps.* (Bromley, B.M.)

Large folio. Oval medallion in ornamental framework. The arms of Mazarin and Mancini quartered beneath.

8 *Ortance Manzini Duchesse de Mazarin, etc. P. Lely pinx—N. Visscher excudit.—A. de Blois fecit.* (B.M.)

9 *Hortense Mancini, duchesse de Mazarin, née a Rome, morte a Chelsey, en Angleterre, le 2 juillet,* 1699. *Ferdinand pinx—Et Fessard sculps.* (Bromley.)

Medallion in stone-work frame. The Duchess is wearing an elaborate costume with a plumed turban.

10 *Hortense Mancini, duchesse de Mazarin. Léris pinx—Fessard sculps.*

Whether Ferdinand or Léris was the painter of the original, this engraving and No. 9 are from the same picture. This one was made for the 10 volume edition of St Evremond.

11 *Ortance Manchini etc. Lely p.—Verkolije f.* 1680. (Bromley, Grainger). A 4to mezzotint.

12 *The dutchess of Mazarine —. —. f. —S. Lloyd exc.* (Bromley, Grainger). Mezzotint.

13 Mezzotint by Van Somer after Lely. (Bromley.)

14 Portrait engraved under the direction of Picart, 8vo. (Bromley, Grainger.)

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